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JOHN FORBES WHITE AND GEORGE REID
ARTISTS AND PATRONS IN NORTH-EAST SCOTLAND
1860-1920

JENNIFER MELVILLE

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Edinburgh

2000

To my mother,
Joan Melville (née Gray),
who taught me to appreciate the Arts
and to admire beauty.

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SYNOPSIS

This thesis traces the relationship between the art collector and connoisseur, John Forbes White (1831-1904) and his protégé the artist George Reid (1841-1913). It looks at how, through his writings and patronage, White changed art in Scotland and ultimately, throughout Britain. Painting, architecture and interior design in Aberdeen between 1860 and 1920 are examined, as is the establishment of public art institutions and societies.

The main text is divided, roughly chronologically, into seven chapters. The first of these chapters examines the friendships established in the 1860s, through which White's classical education and international tastes came to affect the work of his artist friends. It looks at George Reid's time in Europe, particularly in The Netherlands, and at how, through their anonymous pamphlet Thoughts on Art and Notes on the Exhibition of the Royal Scottish Academy of 1868, which they co-authored under the pseudonym "*Veri Vindex*", White and Reid promulgated their ideas on Realism. Chapter Two examines the influence of Reid and White's favourite English artist, George Mason, and their Dutch friend, Jozef Israels, on the Scottish School. George Reid's early portrait style is discussed as are the commissions obtained in Aberdeen for William Leiper and Daniel Cottier. In Chapter Three the Aberdeen Fine Art Exhibition of 1873 and White's critical review of the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1873 are discussed. White's acquisition of works by J.B.C. Corot and Gustave Courbet are also outlined. Chapter Four examines how George Reid introduced flower painting into Scotland and also looks at the influence of his flower paintings on the so-called "Glasgow Boys". It also addresses White's writings on G.P. Chalmers and Reid's increasing interest in artistic institutions. In Chapter Five the continuing influence of John Everett Millais on the portraits of George Reid is examined, as is the collecting of Alexander Macdonald (1837-1884) and also the establishment of Aberdeen Art Gallery. Chapter Six covers White's collecting between 1880-1888. The influence that he had on the artists whom he favoured at the time is analysed, as is the revival of the Aberdeen Artists Society. The sale of White's collection and his move to Dundee is also discussed. The final chapter opens with a review of George Reid's presidency of the Royal Scottish Academy and examines his later paintings. The opening of the Sculpture Courts of Aberdeen Art Gallery is discussed. The Epilogue outlines the collections of Sir James Murray and his involvement in the cultural life of Aberdeen. The Conclusion assesses White's contribution to Scottish art history and taste and Reid's role as a catalyst for the promulgation of White's passions and beliefs.

PREFACE

John Forbes White's contribution to the history of Art in Scotland was, for the first seventy years after his death, mentioned only in passing by the main writers on Scottish art of the day. However, two of his daughters, Ina Mary Harrower and Dorothea Fyfe, both wrote articles on aspects of their father's collecting; Ina publishing "Private Picture Galleries, The Collection of John Forbes White" in Goodwords in 1896 (pp 813-819), John Forbes White (Edinburgh) in 1918 and in 1927, "Jozef Israels and his Aberdeen Friend" for the Aberdeen University Review (pp 108-122). A noted art historian, Ina reflected her father's taste and collecting interests in her own writings, as with, for example, "Studies of Fruit by Courbet" Apollo (Vol. L No 296 1949 pp 95-98). Dorothea, with her co-author C.S. Minto, published John Forbes White, Miller, Collector, Photographer 1831-1904 (Edinburgh 1970). The only other writers who have examined White's contribution to art in any detail were Charles Carter, who as curator of Aberdeen Art Gallery, covered art and patronage in the North-East of Scotland in numerous articles and outlined White's contribution in "Art Patronage in Scotland: John Forbes White" published in the Scottish Art Review, (Vol VI, no 2, 1957, pp. 27-30). Frances Fowle, on completion of her PhD on Alexander Reid, also discussed White's tastes in "The Hague School and the Scots, A Taste for Dutch Pictures" (Apollo August 1991 pp 108-111).

George Reid was still less favoured by critics after his death. With J.L. Caw championing James Guthrie and William MacTaggart, the innovative and influential aspects of Reid's art were obscured, reduced and even sometimes credited to others. W.D. McKay in The Scottish School of Painting (London 1906) had played down Reid's part in the introduction of Realism into Scotland and Agnes McKay in her monograph on Arthur Melville (*Lee on Sea*, 1951) went furthest of all in portraying Reid as the enemy of a younger, more innovative group of artists, who included the subject of her book. It was to be another thirty years before Duncan Macmillan would examine Reid, in Scottish Art 1460-1990 (Mainstream, 1990) as an important landscape painter, rather than, as had been the case before, as a reactionary president of the Royal Scottish Academy and an extremely dull, if talented, portrait painter. One year later John Morrison, having completed his PhD Rural Nostalgia: Painting in

Scotland c.1860-1880 (St Andrews 1989) wrote of Reid's important European contacts and of the vital relationship between White and Reid in "Sir George Reid in Holland, his work with G.A. Mollinger and Jozef Israels" (Jong Holland 1991 No 4 pp 10-19).

Both the assets and the faults of Alexander Macdonald's collecting were examined by Charles Carter in "Alexander Macdonald 1837-1884 - Aberdeen Art Collector" (Scottish Art Review, Vol V, no 3, 1955, pp. 23-28) and again by Francina Irwin in an exhibition catalogue entitled Alexander Macdonald: From Mason to Maecenas in 1985.

My main source of material has come from the uncatalogued archive of correspondence between George Reid, John Forbes White, Jozef Israels, George Paul Chalmers, David Artz, Gerrit Mollinger, Samuel Smiles and others, most of which is housed in Aberdeen Art Gallery. Reid's unpublished autobiography, transcribed by his wife Mia, (in the same archive) was also of great use, as was an unpublished but almost complete catalogue raisonné of Reid's work, compiled, probably by Percy Bate or Harry Townend c.1912. I have also made extensive use of the papers of James Pittendrigh Macgillivray which are held by The National Library of Scotland. The descendants of John Forbes White made the works and letters in their possession freely available to me. These included the correspondence between John Forbes White and William Stott of Oldham which is cited in Chapter 6.

Elements of this thesis, and particularly sections 2,3, & 4 of Chapter 4, appeared in a revised form in "Art and Patronage in Aberdeen 1860-1920", a paper that I delivered at the Scottish Society of Art History's conference on Patronage, and which was published in The Journal of the Scottish Society for Art Historians (Volume 3 1998 pp 16-24). The sixth section of Chapter 5 appeared in a revised form, in An Album of Photographs compiled by Sir John Everett Millais PRA published in Studies in Photography (Edinburgh, 1997). The discussion of the influence of Ancient Greece and Classicism in the eighth section of Chapter 7 was included in a paper entitled John Forbes White, The Classical Tradition and Ideals In Art given at the conference on "The Role of Collections In The Scottish Cultural Tradition", which was held at Aberdeen University in 1998. The third section of Chapter 7 appeared in a revised form in Robert Brough (Aberdeen Art Gallery, 1995).

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PREFACE

John Forbes White's contribution to the history of Art in Scotland was, for the first seventy years after his death, mentioned only in passing by the main writers on Scottish art of the day. However, two of his daughters, Ina Mary Harrower and Dorothea Fyfe, both wrote articles on aspects of their father's collecting; Ina publishing "Private Picture Galleries, The Collection of John Forbes White" in Goodwords in 1896 (pp 813-819), John Forbes White (Edinburgh) in 1918 and in 1927, "Jozef Israels and his Aberdeen Friend" for the Aberdeen University Review (pp 108-122). A noted art historian, Ina reflected her father's taste and collecting interests in her own writings, as with, for example, "Studies of Fruit by Courbet" Apollo (Vol. L No 296 1949 pp 95-98). Dorothea, with her co-author C.S. Minto, published John Forbes White, Miller, Collector, Photographer 1831-1904 (Edinburgh 1970). The only other writers who have examined White's contribution to art in any detail were Charles Carter, who as curator of Aberdeen Art Gallery, covered art and patronage in the North-East of Scotland in numerous articles and outlined White's contribution in "Art Patronage in Scotland: John Forbes White" published in the Scottish Art Review, (Vol VI, no 2, 1957, pp. 27-30). Frances Fowle, on completion of her PhD on Alexander Reid, also discussed White's tastes in "The Hague School and the Scots, A Taste for Dutch Pictures" (Apollo August 1991 pp 108-111).

George Reid was still less favoured by critics after his death. With J.L. Caw championing James Guthrie and William MacTaggart, the innovative and influential aspects of Reid's art were obscured, reduced and even sometimes credited to others. W.D. McKay in The Scottish School of Painting (London 1906) had played down Reid's part in the introduction of Realism into Scotland and Agnes McKay in her monograph on Arthur Melville (Lee on Sea, 1951) went furthest of all in portraying Reid as the enemy of a younger, more innovative group of artists, who included the subject of her book. It was to be another thirty years before Duncan Macmillan would examine Reid, in Scottish Art 1460-1990 (Mainstream, 1990) as an important landscape painter, rather than, as had been the case before, as a reactionary president of the Royal Scottish Academy and an extremely dull, if talented, portrait painter. One year later John Morrison, having completed his PhD Rural Nostalgia: Painting in

Scotland c.1860-1880 (St Andrews 1989) wrote of Reid's important European contacts and of the vital relationship between White and Reid in "Sir George Reid in Holland, his work with G.A. Mollinger and Jozef Israels" (Jong Holland 1991 No 4 pp 10-19).

Both the assets and the faults of Alexander Macdonald's collecting were examined by Charles Carter in "Alexander Macdonald 1837-1884 - Aberdeen Art Collector" (Scottish Art Review, Vol V, no 3, 1955, pp. 23-28) and again by Francina Irwin in an exhibition catalogue entitled Alexander Macdonald: From Mason to Maecenas in 1985.

My main source of material has come from the uncatalogued archive of correspondence between George Reid, John Forbes White, Jozef Israels, George Paul Chalmers, David Artz, Gerrit Mollinger, Samuel Smiles and others, most of which is housed in Aberdeen Art Gallery. Reid's unpublished autobiography, transcribed by his wife Mia, (in the same archive) was also of great use, as was an unpublished but almost complete catalogue raisonné of Reid's work, compiled, probably by Percy Bate or Harry Townend c.1912. I have also made extensive use of the papers of James Pittendrigh Macgillivray which are held by The National Library of Scotland. The descendants of John Forbes White made the works and letters in their possession freely available to me. These included the correspondence between John Forbes White and William Stott of Oldham which is cited in Chapter 6.

Elements of this thesis, and particularly sections 2,3, & 4 of Chapter 4, appeared in a revised form in "Art and Patronage in Aberdeen 1860-1920", a paper that I delivered at the Scottish Society of Art History's conference on Patronage, and which was published in The Journal of the Scottish Society for Art Historians (Volume 3 1998 pp 16-24). The sixth section of Chapter 5 appeared in a revised form, in An Album of Photographs compiled by Sir John Everett Millais PRA published in Studies in Photography (Edinburgh, 1997). The discussion of the influence of Ancient Greece and Classicism in the eighth section of Chapter 7 was included in a paper entitled John Forbes White, The Classical Tradition and Ideals In Art given at the conference on "The Role of Collections In The Scottish Cultural Tradition", which was held at Aberdeen University in 1998. The third section of Chapter 7 appeared in a revised form in Robert Brough (Aberdeen Art Gallery, 1995).

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INTRODUCTION

Three men, each exceptional in his own field, were responsible for fashioning a highly developed artistic environment in the North East of Scotland during the second half of the 19th century. They were the art collector and connoisseur John Forbes White (1831-1904), his protégé, the artist George Reid (1841-1913) and a local granite merchant and collector of art, Alexander Macdonald (1837-1884) (pl. 1). In this thesis I shall describe how it was that a thriving artistic community came about in Aberdeen through the influence and interaction of these men. I shall also explain how they came to have a marked effect on artistic developments, not only in the Aberdeen area, but also throughout Scotland and, to a certain extent, much further afield.

As will be seen, White, Reid and Macdonald created a vibrant and dynamic artistic milieu in Aberdeen. In 1885 this culminated in the erection of a public art gallery for the city, which was largely funded by Macdonald and which came to house his entire collection of paintings. Throughout the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s White encouraged young, innovative artists, both foreign and Scottish, to exhibit and sell their work in Scotland, thus exposing numerous Scottish artists, dealers and collectors to the kind of art that he favoured. White also funded George Reid to study, in both France and in the Netherlands. Through such patronage and through his writings on art White, as patron and mentor, and Reid, who gave physical manifestation to a new style of painting, came to be, to a large extent, responsible for the introduction of modern art - what came to be known as Realism - into Scotland.

Realism had been created in France by Gustave Courbet, J.B.C. Corot and other artists of the Barbizon School in the middle of the 19th century. A little later it was taken up in the Netherlands by members of the Hague School, including Gerrit Mollinger and Jozef Israels. The Realists eschewed the colourful, sentimental, historical, narrative, minutely detailed art that was then the norm. In their work they dealt with the real world, where beauty, truth and pathos were sought in the commonplace. They depicted ordinary working people, not as quaint and humorous but as proud and heroic. Their landscapes were neither classical idylls, nor

magnificent mountain scenery but the flat fields of the farmland around them. Their interiors and still lifes were emphatically unsophisticated and apparently spontaneous.

The introduction of Realism had coincided with the political struggles that had erupted across Europe from 1848 onwards. It was an art movement with a strong political element. John Forbes White was a political liberal, who championed freethinking. He found no pleasure nor interest in what he perceived to be self-satisfied depictions of the rich and patronising portrayals of the poor, in which many British artists of the time specialised. Instead he admired this new European art, in which his own liberal beliefs were so clearly reflected. He bought and exhibited works by the earliest exponents of the movement – Courbet, Corot, Mollinger and Israels – and encouraged the Scottish artists whom he knew to produce similar paintings, in which beauty could exist in the poorest peasant, the bleakest landscape, the most simple and unmannered still life.

White's desire to seek out such art and to bring it back to Scotland can be explained by the fact that he was taught by one of Scotland's greatest thinkers, John Stuart Blackie. This famous classical scholar had studied widely abroad and had written on concepts of beauty. Indeed the very elements of art history as a science in Scotland can be traced to his book On Beauty - Three Discourses delivered in the University of Edinburgh with an Exposition of the Doctrine of the Beautiful According to Plato of 1858 in which he relates his own intuitive understanding of modern art and art theory to Platonic theories on the beautiful. As Plato described Hippias and Socrates¹ discussing how beauty could be found in the work of Pheidias, but also in a maiden, a mare, a lyre and even a pot, so Blackie could also look for beauty in ordinary everyday things – in a row of houses, a carpet or a woman's attire. Blackie taught White, his most "beloved student", whom he used to refer to affectionately as Λευκῶν (the white or shining one)² to understand the polymathic aspects of beauty. Soon White came to feel the same passion for beauty and art as his teacher and, like Blackie, to believe that art should be honest, not artificial, that it should not be literal nor minutely realistic but the creation of the soul and the imagination.

¹ Plato Greater Hippias (284c) (English version by Loeb & Browse) <http://www.perseus.tu>.

² Ina Mary Harrower John Forbes White Edinburgh 1918 p 25.

Significantly, in spite of his admiration for John Ruskin's writings, Blackie disliked English art in general, in which "common and comical subjects are allowed to occupy the painter's canvas".³ His pupil White, similarly, found little to attract him in English art and, from his earliest days as a collector and connoisseur, he always looked further afield for artistic succour, particularly to France and the Netherlands where he bought numerous paintings by his most favoured artists, Courbet, Corot, Mollinger and Israels. These men all went on to have an enormous effect on the introduction of modern art into France, the Netherlands and to Great Britain. Over his long career Jozef Israels, for example, came to influence many artists – both in The Netherlands (Vincent van Gogh and Max Liebermann) and in England (Sir Luke Fildes and Frank Bramley). In Scotland, however, where White and Reid were so actively promoting his work, Israels' influence was more far-reaching and occurred much earlier. By the 1870s Realist art, and Israels' particular branch of it, had become an established and accepted painting style in Scotland. The presence of Israels' work in Scotland at this early date was to transform the art of numerous Scottish artists, most notably that of George Paul Chalmers, George and Archy Reid, Joseph Farquharson, Colin Hunter, R. Gemmel Hutchison and William McTaggart.

Writing in 1917 James L. Caw established the importance of William McTaggart in the hierarchy of Scottish Victorian artists, placing him on what now appears a somewhat exaggerated level.⁴ Seventy-two years later Lindsay Errington could look at McTaggart's work more fairly, giving credit to his talent but also showing how he had not developed entirely independently of his contemporaries.⁵ She suggests very plausibly, for example, how Whistler could have been a source of inspiration for his wave paintings⁶ yet fails to note the fact that White had been Scotland's greatest champion of Whistler from the 1860s and that McTaggart's introduction to his work could easily have come initially from his Aberdeen friends. McTaggart's debt to the Hague School is acknowledged by Macmillan⁷ and indeed McTaggart's bold interpretations of the coastal landscape and the crofters of Kintyre do reveal a great debt to Jozef Israels. In his later, more imaginative paintings of the

³ J.S. Blackie *On Beauty* Edinburgh 1858 p 66.

⁴ James L. Caw *William McTaggart* Glasgow 1917.

⁵ Lindsay Errington *William McTaggart 1835-1910* Edinburgh 1989 p 9.

⁶ Lindsay Errington *op. cit.* p 59.

⁷ Duncan Macmillan *Scottish Art 1460-1990* p 253.

seas that surround the peninsular, however, his debt is more clearly to Mesdag and Courbet, who had both moved from painting coastal scenes to concentrating on waves alone. This debt had, in all probability, come about through McTaggart's close friendship with George Paul Chalmers, who was part of White's close coterie of artist-friends, and who was thus very familiar with the work of these artists. McTaggart's own "wave" paintings also suggest that he was aware of Archy Reid's paintings of waves, such as *A Lone Shore* (AAG) which had set a precedent for such seascapes in Scotland nearly ten years before McTaggart's painted his "wave" pictures. Whilst McTaggart's paintings exhibit a lighter palette than those of Archy, in his new use of tone and lack of anecdotal content McTaggart was following trends that had been established in Scotland by Aberdeen artists many years earlier. His later paintings of waves, in which the influence of Realism truly begins to be felt, were not entirely independent of all other artists, nor even of his close circle of Scottish friends.

In spite of Errington's reassessment, McTaggart has maintained his position as one of Scotland's most influential artists, his art being seen as uniquely modern, instinctive and even inspired – he has even been called "the father of Scottish Painting".⁸ Caw regarded McTaggart as supreme amongst his peers; not only in terms of the intrinsic quality of his work, but also in the way in which his art affected that of his successors. This view has held sway generally ever since.⁹ Yet in many ways George Reid influenced the next generation as much, if not more. In landscape painting he was the first artist to use the new compositional formats and tonalities of the Barbizon and Hague Schools. Soon many of his peers adopted a similar style. It can also be detected in the work of much younger artists – such as D.Y. Cameron's tonal and strongly horizontal painting of Berwick (Private collection) or his sombre view of Durham of 1903 (GAGM) which, both in subject and treatment, recalls Reid's work of the same title. Reid's portraits – a unique amalgam of Dutch and Scottish antecedents – are powerful exercises in tone, executed with great bravura – that had a marked effect on the portraits of James Guthrie, Alexander Roche and even John Everett Millais. Reid was the first Scottish artist to experiment with flower painting – thus forming a vital link between Courbet, Diaz, Fantin-Latour and "Glasgow Boys"

⁸ Angus Grossart relates this fact in the foreword to Errington, *op. cit.* p 7 but does not cite the original source.

⁹ See, for example, Halsby *Scottish Watercolours 1740-1940* London 1986 p 120.

Macgillivray, Melville and Stuart Park, who were to imitate Reid's flower studies of the 1870s and 1880s and who were later to excel in that genre.

It was certainly in the interests of one of the first writers to chronicle the history of art in Scotland, W.D. McKay, to obscure the part that both Reid and White had played in introducing modern art into Scotland. In so doing he could instead credit the fundamental changes in subject matter and treatment to himself and other artists who were working in East Lothian during the 1870s and 1880s. As will be seen, the role that White and Reid played in this Haddington-based story was in fact, vital. Whether their contribution was ignored or merely overlooked by McKay in his most influential book¹⁰ (he mentions White only in passing and then with reference to Corot) the omission has undoubtedly gone some way to obscuring the vital role that they played in the introduction of Realism into Scotland.

In comparison to Reid the artist and White the connoisseur, whose knowledge and appreciation of art was genuine and innate, Alexander Macdonald might be likened by some to the *arriviste* banker Walter, whom Maupassant satirised in *Bel-Ami* and who amassed works in quick succession by artists who had done well at the Salon. However, in spite of Macdonald's caution in buying principally the works of artists who were established and successful, he was unusual in his desire to meet these men and to learn about their art. He visited them in England but, more importantly, invited many of them to stay at his home, Kepplestone, in Aberdeen. W.Q. Orchardson, J.C. Hook, his sons Allan and Bryan, Charles Keene, Linley Sambourne, John Singer Sargent and John Everett Millais all spent time in Aberdeen, where they would have seen the various collections of Realist art and where they were also introduced to John Forbes White. For John Everett Millais this contact with Scottish artists and collectors was to have a profound effect on his later work. He moved away from the tenets of Pre-Raphaelitism towards a more tonal treatment. His landscapes came to share many features with those of Reid and his Dutch friends. His portraits, which early in his career had been such an inspiration to the young George Reid, came in turn to show a marked debt to the work of Reid, who was, by the 1870s, becoming Scotland's best known and most admired portrait painter.

¹⁰ McKay's views have been confirmed by Macmillan *op. cit.* p 254 and Martin Forrest, in conversation with the author.

Moreover Macdonald's knowledge and taste in art changed and developed over his short life. Having bought many works by academicians, he later became a willing recipient of much more challenging paintings by George Reid, George Paul Chalmers and several European artists. Macdonald's gift to the city of Aberdeen of the paintings that he owned established the excellent collections of today. He also made generous provision for the building that was eventually to house them. More importantly, his proclaimed belief in supporting up-and-coming artists led him to leave a legacy to Aberdeen Art Gallery which, he specified, should be reserved for works completed within twenty-five years of purchase. Macdonald wished to continue the noble tradition that he and his friends had always followed, of buying from artists, rather than from dealers. His bequest has ensured a century's collecting of contemporary art, bought at low prices, often from artists, and now constituting one of the finest collections of 20th century art in Britain.

When describing the state of Scottish Art in the 1860s and 1870s Roger Billcliffe admits to the influence of French and Hague school artists "who had shown in Glasgow"¹¹ but he fails to note that they had already been shown in Aberdeen and Edinburgh, where their influence had been quicker to have an effect. Critics such as the Irwins and Billcliffe have suggested that, with the possible exception of McTaggart, the Glasgow movement came about through a rejection of what went before in Scotland and that, in the 1880s, young artists had discovered modern art in the ateliers of Paris.¹² Yet all Scots before them had not concentrated exclusively on heather and broken dolls. The "Glasgow Boys" were not the first Scottish artists to be influenced by contemporary French art. Before they ever went to study abroad (in some cases very briefly) they had already been exposed to the Realism of French, Dutch and Scottish artists. This art, which had been brought to Scotland largely because of White's activity in promoting it, was to have a marked effect on their work, as will be shown by comparing individual paintings (see Chapter 4).

Degas had once stated "in our beginnings Fantin, Whistler and I were all on the same road, the road from Holland".¹³ This was true of White too and, as for Degas, Fantin-Latour and Whistler, that road had been just the start of a long journey of

¹¹ Roger Billcliffe *The Glasgow Boys* pp 27-29.

¹² Francina and David Irwin *Scottish Painters at Home and Abroad 1700-1900* London 1975 p 375.

¹³ Marcel Guérin (ed) *Degas' Letters* (translated by M. Kay) Oxford 1947 p 235

discovery. White moved on quickly to embrace new artistic developments and to encourage successive generations of artists. By the time the National Gallery in London acquired its first painting by Jozef Israels in 1907, in Scotland the taste for such art, except amongst the most doggedly traditional collectors, had all but disappeared. White had gone on to buy paintings by much younger artists – such as *A Funeral Service in the Highlands* (GAGM) by James Guthrie. He championed the work of Arthur Melville and William Stott, both of whom stayed with him and painted the family portraits. Such visits to the home of this dynamic man were clearly intense and enjoyable – Melville wrote a poem about one such visit and Stott penned to his patron; “Do you know that the six weeks with you at Seaton Cottage are quite the prettiest six weeks of my life – will they ever come again? They must. I cannot, will not believe that such Eldorado days are gone forever”.¹⁴

Unlike Billcliffe, generations of art critics, including Harrower, Caw, Carter, Macmillan, Morrison and Fowle,¹⁵ have rightly recognised White’s contribution to the introduction of modern art to Scotland through his collection of Dutch Realist paintings. To a lesser extent there has been moderate recognition of his patronage of British artists. However, these critics have not explored in detail the wider effect that White had on art and art criticism in Scotland because they have focused almost exclusively on the innovative nature of White’s collection of paintings. White was far more than a collector. The Irwins identify the 1880s as marking the watershed between early and late Victorian art and ideas, but do not explain why that should have been. They note that the vigorous realism of Courbet had certainly influenced the younger men but not that it was their Scottish patron, White, who had first brought Courbet’s work to Scotland. They cite three Scottish critics, W.E. Henley, R.A.M. Stevenson and D.S. MacColl as having taken a fundamental part in the movement away from Ruskin’s emphasis on meticulous realism and literary emphasis, but do not include John Forbes White in their discussion. They also suggest that a similar role

¹⁴ Ina Mary Harrower John Forbes White Edinburgh 1918 p 73.

¹⁵ Ina Mary Harrower “Joseph Israels and his Aberdeen Friend” Aberdeen University Review Vol. XIV, 2 March 1927 pp 108-122, James Caw Sir James Guthrie PRSA London 1932 p 21, Charles Carter “Art Patronage in Scotland: John Forbes White” Scottish Art Review, Vol. VI, no 2, 1957, pp 27-30, Duncan Macmillan *op. cit.* pp 243-244. James Morrison “Sir George Reid in Holland, his work with G A Mollinger and Josef Israels” Jong Holland 1991 No 4 pp 10-19 & Frances Fowle “The Hague School and the Scots, A Taste for Dutch Pictures” Apollo August 1991 pp 108-111.

had been played by young Scottish and English artists - such as Wilson Steer and Sickert but fail to recognise that this movement had been instigated by White, just two years after these two English artists were born.¹⁶ White was not only a collector of art, but also a patron, a critic, a connoisseur and a catalyst for the movement towards modern art in Scotland and ultimately, throughout Britain. Unlike, for example, William Burrell, Alexander Reid, James Staats Forbes and other principal dealers and collectors of the day, White was a scholar, who wrote eloquently and knowledgeably about art, both ancient and modern. In his writings he described with delight the naïve Tanagra figures that he collected, he extolled the great masters Rembrandt and Velasquez but was equally happy when praising the spontaneity and freshness of the paintings of up-and-coming artists, William Stott and John Lavery. In Aberdeen, Dutch, French, English and Scottish artists were all brought into contact, both with White's remarkable collection of international art but also, more importantly, with his ideas on art, which had been nurtured in him at an early age by his own teacher, John Stuart Blackie.

The views that Blackie had expounded in On Beauty were to have their echoes, decades later, in the art of the painters whom White knew, in Reid's speeches of the 1890s, when he was President of the Royal Scottish Academy, in the choice of design for Aberdeen Art Gallery's Sculpture Courts, built in 1905, and in numerous ideas passed amongst White's artistic and intellectual group and delineated in the correspondence of Reid and White over fifty years. The effect that this lively, enthusiastic – even passionate – teacher was to have, not only on his own pupil White, but also, through White, on generations of artists, architects, dealers and collectors, was incalculable. His enlightened, pan-European outlook affected fundamentally the art world of Scotland, making it far more receptive to foreign and modern movements than was the case south of the border, where a stronger, indigenous culture and more rigid methods of teaching prevented the free flow of ideas which had brought about these changes in Scotland.

That Blackie's fundamental contribution to the beginnings of art history in Scotland, and the consequent chain of influence that resulted, should have been missed by all writers who have attempted to chronicle the history of Scottish art might

¹⁶ Irwin & Irwin Scottish Painters at Home and Abroad 1985 pp 370-373.

be explained in part by the fact that, as Murdo Macdonald has more than once pointed out,¹⁷ it is a tendency of today's scholars to view their subject in much narrower terms than would have been the case in the Scotland of Blackie and White. Aberdonians were particularly receptive to the qualities of Barbizon and Hague School art - even émigré Aberdonians such as James Staats Forbes and Alexander Young chose to collect this art. Aberdeen's unique cultural and trading links with the Netherlands might have facilitated such a reception, (for the language, place names, religion and learning in Aberdeen has closer ties with the Netherlands than in any other Scottish city) but the single most important factor in the reception of Realism was the chain of learning - from Blackie to White and White to Reid - the unique climate that had come about through the interaction of these men. More importantly it was what George Davie famously described as the "democratic intellect"¹⁸ - an ability to think across subjects, with philosophy as the root for such thinking - which Blackie taught in Aberdeen that had created an environment in which such varied disciplines could be assessed together. It was in such an intellectual and educational environment that a classicist could write on beauty and a flour merchant expound knowledgeably and profoundly on art.

To explain how this unique phenomenon of cross-fertilisation, which took place in Aberdeen at this time, should have been so quickly forgotten, it is important to examine the personalities involved and the fates that life dealt these men. White's role as an art critic was obscured by his own modesty - he frequently wrote articles anonymously or merely signed them "JFW". In 1888 he was bankrupted, partly by a general recession in the flour milling industry but as much by his excessive generosity and passion for collecting. As a result his magnificent collection was broken up and sold off. Almost all of the works that were sold lost their original provenance in the process, so that in subsequent catalogues the impression was often given that their original owner had been whoever had bought a particular painting from White's sale.

Although the relationship cooled considerably in later years, White was always closely associated with George Reid. Although innovative and revolutionary in his early career, when he became President of the Royal Scottish Academy, Reid

¹⁷ Murdo Macdonald's inaugural lecture, Dundee University 1999 and "Patrick Geddes and Charles Rennie Mackintosh" Charles Rennie Mackintosh Newsletter No 76, Summer 1999 p 12.

¹⁸ George Davie The Democratic Elder Edinburgh University Press 1964.

came to be known as a bastion of the artistic establishment and an impediment to change. It seems very likely that the poor standing in which Reid was held in Scottish art circles at the very time when the art history of the nation was beginning to be chronicled, may have gone some way to obscuring White's fundamental role in the artistic innovations that had brought about the art of that time. Yet, if White's role was obscured, his reputation nevertheless remained intact, his taste always being seen as exemplary, his criticism always valued. Reid's fate was much worse.

Whilst Caw briefly noted White's contribution to the development of Scottish art and to the careers of the slightly younger men of whom he wrote, Reid's place in their story was virtually ignored. Caw's reasons for playing down Reid's achievements were somewhat less personal than those of McKay. He wished to promote James Guthrie, both as an artist and as a forthright and brave President of the Royal Scottish Academy. His method of doing this was to credit to Guthrie many of the achievements of Reid (who preceded him in the post), both administrative and artistic. Caw, for example, argued that it was Guthrie who had ended the parochialism of the Royal Scottish Academy and that, on Guthrie's accession, "it was decided to make it as widely representative of Scottish Art as possible."¹⁹ As will be shown, it was in fact George Reid who had opened the Academy up to artists from all over Scotland and to other disciplines, especially architecture. Caw cites as Guthrie's greatest qualification for being President his wish for the Academy to illustrate an informed outlook on current art achievement in other countries and his desire that it "should be an institution for the advancement of art in Scotland rather than merely a national body of artists".²⁰ How closely these wishes echo Reid's beliefs expressed when, in 1891, he proclaimed to the general meeting of the Royal Scottish Academy that the members should "do their utmost to make the annual exhibitions thoroughly representative of all that is best in the current art of the day, not only of the Scottish, but of other schools as well".²¹ Caw also ascribes to Guthrie the instigation of a reduced hang, which had, in fact, been orchestrated by Reid.

¹⁹ *op. cit.* p 97-8.

²⁰ *op. cit.* p 99.

²¹ George Reid's speech to the General Meeting of the Royal Scottish Academy 11 November 1891, p 5 of hand-written transcript in Reid Archive, Aberdeen Art Gallery.

Reid's touchy and difficult personality did not help his cause. The rebellious young artist, who had co-authored the Veri Vindex pamphlet and had been so keen to see change in his youth, was ultimately less amenable to seeing it in the work of others. Reid, who in his early work had given physical form to White's ideals, was not able to keep up with his mentor's ever changing and developing taste. Late in life Reid succeeded in alienating the entire artistic establishment - artists, critics and even, ultimately, John Forbes White. Both politically and intellectually White came from a different school - he was a generous spirit who welcomed and indeed sought artistic change throughout his life. His later, undeserved, obscurity may well have been caused partly by his association with Reid.

It would be wrong, however, to forget, as many have done, Reid's achievements in both bringing his own version of Realism to Scotland and for many years influencing and encouraging numerous younger artists. Perhaps Reid's demise had come about too recently for Caw to be objective about his achievements. There is, after all, often a natural tendency to forget the achievements of the preceding generation and to assign progress and development to one's own acquaintances and contemporaries. In so doing, however, Caw was ignoring the very clear continuation of artistic influence and patronage that followed from Reid's generation to that of the Glasgow Boys and, ultimately, well into the 20th century.

In 1886 an exhibition in Edinburgh brought together the work of Corot, Millet, Monticelli, Israels and the Maris brothers. In lauding Guthrie and his contemporaries Caw writes of this exhibition: 'It should perhaps be noted that the influence of these pictures amongst the young was chiefly in the West, where Academic prestige was of no account'.²² He ignores the fact that the work of Corot, Israels and Millet was in Scotland at that date mainly due to the enlightened promotion of their art by White and Reid. Academic prestige amongst Guthrie and his contemporaries certainly was of account - many of them accepted academic honours, Guthrie becoming the 8th President of the Royal Scottish Academy. Yet it is doubtful whether he could have done so had Reid not preceded him. This is true not just because Reid had the casting vote in his election but because he, not Guthrie, had broken down the barriers of parochialism. Reid and his mentor John Forbes White had encouraged Guthrie early

²² James L Caw *op. cit.* p 33.

in his career, creating a market for his paintings and promoting his work through numerous exhibitions. Thus in no small way John Forbes White, George Reid and to a lesser extent Alexander Macdonald, not James Guthrie and the men who followed them, can be justifiably credited with banishing the “glue-pot” school from Scotland and the more cloying elements of Victorian anecdotal and historical art. By introducing and promoting to numerous British artists pure landscape, the realistic depiction of the poor and still life painting, they undoubtedly helped modern art to arrive in Scotland, to be accepted there and then to affect the art of many artists south of the border.

CHAPTER 1

The Legacy of a Classical Education and Friendships Formed 1860-1868

1.1. The Significance of a Friendship

When in 1883 Mia Reid was writing a biography of her husband, the artist George Reid, she reflected happily on a lifelong friendship which her husband had enjoyed with fellow Aberdonian John Forbes White:

The next following Wednesday 10th August is in some respects a memorable one, for it was then that his acquaintance with John Forbes White commenced - He called at GR's home in the Copper Companies Court accompanied by Mrs White and Professor and Mrs Geddes: More than 19 years have elapsed since then, and this evening (Sept. 13 '83) as we write in 20 Duke St Edinburgh, Mr & Mrs White have just left us after a short but delightful visit, it would be hard to say how much good, how much happiness how much initial helpfulness has resulted from the acquaintance thus begun - All GR's subsequent career has been influenced in many most important ways by him - but for Mr White he should never have gone to Holland, made the acquaintance of Mollinger and Israels - How great an influence this has had on his work it is impossible to say.¹

In this passage Mia Reid quite rightly attributes her husband's success to the influence of John Forbes White. Not only did John Forbes White affect the career of his protégé George Reid, he also influenced to a great degree the introduction of Realism into Scotland, and indeed Great Britain. Caw rightly acknowledged White's standing with his contemporaries and his fundamental contribution to the modern movement, both as a connoisseur and as an arbiter of taste.² Unlike William Burrell, James Staats Forbes and other principal collectors of the day, White did not merely collect art. As well as buying contemporary art he would write to and meet the artist whose work he had purchased. He brought back many paintings from the Continent, selling them on to his friends if he could not keep them himself. Thus he introduced his friends and acquaintances to the art and artists whom he favoured. He also wrote - eloquently and knowledgeably - about ancient and modern art. White's methods of patronage are

¹ Journal of Mia Reid Volume I p 48. The Professor Geddes was William Geddes, not Patrick Geddes. See footnote 8.

² James L. Caw *Sir James Guthrie PRSA* London 1932 p 21.

exemplified by his first contact with the young and impoverished, yet highly ambitious, artist George Reid.

1.2 George Reid

George Reid's background was very different from that of White. Reid, the son of a blacksmith, attended the Trades School and when he was only ten years old his father took him from school and sent him to a Mr Hughes, an engraver and lithographer, to begin a seven year apprenticeship.³ Evidently the young boy (pl. 2) was quite miserable and a few weeks later he was sent once again to The Trades School. In October 1853 family finances appeared to be improving and George was sent to Aberdeen Grammar School, which was the best school in the city, where the renowned Latinist Dr James Melvin taught and where Lord Byron had been educated some forty years before. Reid's introduction to this civilised and cultivated society however, was brought to an abrupt end only nine months later when his father was declared bankrupt. The Reid's shop and its contents were sold and the family moved into a flat above a baker's shop. With the birth of George's youngest brother Sam⁴ further cuts to the household budget had to be sought. Another brother, Archibald⁵ - to the ignominy of the entire family - was sent to the charity school, Robert Gordon's Hospital, and George, on 10th July 1854, aged 12 years and 8 months, entered the lithographic firm of Keith and Gibb to begin a seven year apprenticeship.

Although Reid despised his arduous job, working in unhealthy, crowded conditions for long hours and for little pay, there he discovered his innate talent for draughtsmanship and, through this, he could see the possibility of a better life. At this time he worked on the illustrations for John Stuart's Sculptured Stones of Scotland.⁶ Towards the end of his apprenticeship he became the chief draughtsman on this project - a task which was to play an important part in his later tastes. He took painting lessons

³ Mia Reid *op. cit.* Vol. I p 25.

⁴ After leaving school Samuel Reid RSW (1854-1919) was apprenticed to the Glasgow architect William Leiper but, like his two older brothers George and Archibald, later became a professional artist. His early training, however, is evident in his choice of subject matter - favouring as he did architecture and particularly cathedrals.

⁵ Archibald David Reid (1844-1908) also became an artist, being elected ARSA in 1892. He was especially talented in watercolour and was a member of RSW. He was also actively involved in setting up and running the Aberdeen Artists Society.

⁶ Published for The Spalding Club in 1856.

with an itinerant portrait painter, Willie Niddrie, who had himself studied under James Giles RSA (1801-1870) and, at the end of the apprenticeship in 1862, he enrolled at The Trustees Academy in Edinburgh, where he stayed for two years. Reid had already met Sir George Harvey (1806-1876), having been introduced to him when still a boy by an acquaintance of his aunt. There can be little doubt that the friendship that developed between the young student and Harvey (who two years later became President of The Royal Scottish Academy) facilitated Reid's acceptance into the established art community.

Reid's plans to pursue a professional career as an artist, however, were thwarted by family commitments. Two of Reid's older brothers had gone abroad to seek their fortunes. Now the only resident adult male in the family (apart from his bankrupt father) Reid, weighed down with responsibilities and the need to make money, returned to Aberdeen in 1864, where he was forced to make ends meet by colouring photographs and working on illustrations for the local newspapers.

Reid's career break came with the memorable meeting described by Mia Reid. After this first meeting White invited Reid to his home, Seaton Cottage the following day.⁷ Reid dined there and that same evening obtained a commission to paint a portrait of White's niece Blanche (untraced pl. 3), the daughter of William Duguid Geddes who had been rector of The Grammar School which Reid had attended briefly and who was now Professor of Greek at King's College.⁸ Thus began the careful nurturing and moulding of this young artist, who was ultimately, under White's patronage and guidance, to reach the pinnacle of his profession.

1.3 John Forbes White

To understand how it was that John Forbes White, the merchant son of a Calvinist Presbyterian, should have such a fascination for art it is necessary to examine

⁷ Journal of Mia Reid Vol. I p 50.

⁸ Sir William Duguid Geddes (1828-1900) gained his MA from University and King's Colleges, Aberdeen in 1846. In 1853 he became rector of Aberdeen Grammar School, and in 1855 was appointed Professor of Greek at University and King's Colleges, Aberdeen, a post he later held in the United University from 1860 to 1885. In 1885 he became Principal and Vice Chancellor of the University. In 1876 he was awarded an LLD from Edinburgh University and was knighted in 1892. Geddes was a close friend of White - as well as his brother-in-law - the two shared an interest in the Classics. Through White, Geddes proved to be a loyal patron to George Reid who painted many portraits of various members of Geddes' family and also of his colleagues.

his youthful influences and his education. The family wealth of John Forbes White had been created by his father William White who was a flour miller. William White had leased Kettocks Mill on the banks of the River Don just north of Old Aberdeen. His relatively modest business had been transformed into a thriving concern as a result of rising prices caused by the scarcity of corn during the Napoleonic Wars. He served on the Town Council and, from 1845, acted as American Vice-Consul.⁹

William White had five extremely talented children. The boys were sent to Aberdeen Grammar School. Like so many Scots White gained a thorough grounding in Latin at school - in his case an exceptional grounding from an exceptional teacher, James Melvin who was the Latin master at Aberdeen Grammar School. At this school the oldest brother in the family, George, had died as a result of an incident of bullying that went badly wrong. For this reason - or perhaps because of their sheer intellectual abilities (both were dux) - the two younger brothers, Adam and John, were sent to Marischal College at a very early age. John entered as first bursar aged thirteen in 1844 and gained a degree in 1848.

It was at Marischal College that White first had his eyes opened to an academic and intellectual world and specifically to the concepts and possibilities of beauty. A Regius Chair of Humanity had been created some five years earlier and Melvin had been tipped for the post, but his teaching was methodical rather than inspirational and he had not published. Instead the post was filled by another man who had been educated in Aberdeen but who had also recently finished an extended period of study abroad in Germany and Italy. This man was John Stuart Blackie (1809-1895).¹⁰ Blackie's teaching was both inspirational and unusual as this account by one of his students reveals:

We entered college in those days at an early age, and were surprised and delighted by the exuberance and spirit of our new Professor.... Jokes came not infrequently and witty, wise sayings; yet excellent work was done, though on lines new to us. Looking at a drawing of the Apollo Belvedere or the Discobolus on the walls, he would describe it and its history in free, flowing Latin, and generally encourage us to stand up in the class and

⁹ He is listed as such in the Aberdeen Post Office directories of the 1830s and 1840s.

¹⁰ John Stuart Blackie had himself been a bursar and student at Marischal College, and after a period of study in Germany (Göttingen and Berlin), returned there as Professor of Humanity in 1839. He studied for the Scottish bar and was later (from 1852-1882) Professor of Greek at Edinburgh University where he also founded and endowed a Celtic chair in 1882. He was William Dyce's lifelong friend and intellectual confidant.

declaim, first more or less on his own lines, and afterwards by giving us another statue to be described in our own words, correcting errors at the close. Encouragement and the gift of friendship were the secrets of his power among us. To be invited to his house on the Saturday evenings for private reading in some less well known Latin author was the best reward of all. On these occasions he treated us as if we were his sons or younger brothers.¹¹

Marischal College was a Protestant University and had been founded in opposition to the Catholic Kings College. As such it was based on the same principles as other Protestant universities - most famously, the oldest of them all, Marburg (founded July 1527). In such universities the teaching of Greek was paramount, since under Lutheran beliefs Greek was the true language. Unlike Catholic Latin, Greek could lead the way to the truest form of the New Testament, which had originally been transcribed in Greek.

Blackie was employed to teach Latin, but Greek in his mind was equally, if not more, important. Greece - its language, art, architecture and culture - was held up to his students as representing the ideal lifestyle. This ideal of physical perfection, naturalism and truth to nature was quite at variance with the gilded affectation of contemporary design and with the sentimental, narrative and historical elements of much Victorian art. Blackie's spontaneous method of teaching and obvious passion for his subject was to have a remarkable effect on his students, who became extremely well versed in all aspects of Greek culture.

Amongst Blackie's many and varied publications was one entitled The Pronunciation of Greek and another On Beauty. Blackie's evening chats with White, and other pupils, including White's future brother-in-law William Geddes, who became Professor of Greek in Aberdeen and who was, from 1885-1900, the Principal of the University, developed into a Greek Society which still exists in Aberdeen today. At the Society's meetings, the conversation often turned to the subject of classical beauty. It was in this way that White became acquainted with Greek Art and also to Blackie's wide-ranging views on beauty, both of the ancient and the modern worlds.

On graduating John Forbes White, who intended to follow a medical career, moved to Edinburgh where he took anatomy classes. There he was taught by Sir James

¹¹ G. Patrick Edwards "Aberdeen and its Classical Tradition" Aberdeen University Review no 176 Autumn 1986 p 418.

Young Simpson (1811-1870), inventor of chloroform (tales relate how Simpson's friends would end up under the table from his early experiments with chloroform). His fellow students included the eminent surgeon and pioneer photographer Thomas Keith (1827-1895) whom White had known since his schooldays.¹² Keith introduced White to the techniques of salt printing and White soon took to his new hobby with alacrity. Trips to the Orkneys followed and White developed a keen sense for a good photograph, becoming expert in composition with a leaning towards melancholic scenes of ancient and softly-weathered buildings such as St Magnus Cathedral in Kirkwall and St Machar's Cathedral in Old Aberdeen. Another favoured spot was the area below St Machar's - a stretch of the River Don near what was soon to become White's own home, Seaton Cottage.¹³

White's father William had a house in King Street, one of the main - and at that time fairly fashionable - thoroughfares in Aberdeen. Since 1840 however, he had also rented a two-roomed miller's cottage, close to Kettocks Mills on the Don. The cottage dates back to the 14th century and was supposedly on the site of a monastery. This was a romantic choice; a country idyll. Opposite this modest cottage (pl. 4), on the other side of the River Don, stands the Cathedral of St Machar. From this simple home John Forbes White and his brother Adam were greeted every morning by their own private vision of the ancient cathedral which seems to have inspired the White boys to a passion for art, beauty and religion.

For Adam passion came in the form of a religious fervour for missionary work. As the third son, John had assumed that one or other of his older brothers George and Adam would carry on the family business when their father died in 1845 and that he would be left to pursue his chosen career of medicine. With George now dead and Adam a missionary John Forbes White was forced to abandon his planned studies in medicine and take up the responsibilities of running the flour mill.

He took the opportunities afforded by the family business to travel extensively

¹² Dorothea Fyfe & C.S. Minto John Forbes White, Miller, Collector, Photographer 1831-1904 Edinburgh 1970 p 9. Thomas Keith married Lizzie Johnston, who was a sister of John Forbes White's wife, Ina Johnston. White also knew D. O. Hill whom he had probably first met through Blackie. See Mr F. C. Tilney's account of the 1901 Glasgow International Exhibition and J.S. Blackie Notes on a Life Edinburgh 1910 p 101.

¹³ White's salt prints are extremely rare, the best collection being with The Canadian Centre for Architecture.

abroad, researching into improved milling methods and, on his return, introducing technological innovations at his mill. White's travels lead him to Germany and Italy suggesting, perhaps, that he may have been spurred on to such travels by Blackie's tales of his own time in Europe, when he was, through choice, surrounded by artists. The milling business also supplied White with a ready income, which he proceeded to spend almost exclusively on his artistic pursuits and passions. His early introduction to art proved to be the impetus for his own life-long mission of patronage of the arts. The very beginnings of this mission came quite by chance, when White saw for the first time the work of the aesthetic decorator, designer of stained glass and artist J. Daniel Cottier (1838-1891) in the house of a friend.¹⁴

1.4 Daniel Cottier

Following his return to Aberdeen c.1852-3 White lived initially with his widowed mother at 127 King Street but he also began to use the house that his father had leased, Seaton Cottage. White's first patronage of the arts came shortly after his marriage in 1859 when he commissioned Daniel Cottier to refurbish this home. The choice was a natural one to make as Cottier (though not an Aberdonian as stated by Irwin, Hardie and Billcliffe),¹⁵ like White, was interested in modern movements in art. Cottier extended the house by adding a drawing room and dining room at the front of the house. Both rooms were embellished with curved, beamed ceilings and tall gothic windows. Cottier inserted stained glass into the front door, with John and Ina's initials entwined. He also designed and installed stained and painted glass roundels for the windows, each measuring approximately 10 in. across. In the windows of the dining room were displayed famous artists; Raphael, Crabbit, della Robbia, Titian, Velasquez, Palissy and Leonardo. In a side window were Zeuxis, Rembrandt and Benvenuto Cellini (pl. 5). In the drawing room were literary muses; Electra, Antigone, Cassandra, Emily, Dido, Ophelia, Miranda in the far right roundel and next to her Helen of Troy (pl. 6).¹⁶ Gould recounts how the heads were surrounded by amber and gold tinted

¹⁴ Ina Mary Harrower John Forbes White Edinburgh 1918 p 31.

¹⁵ David and Francina Irwin Scottish Painters at Home and Abroad Faber & Faber 1975 p 377, William Hardie Scottish Painting 1837-1939 London 1976 p 82 & Roger Billcliffe The Glasgow Boys London 1985 p 13.

¹⁶ I am indebted to the late John Harrower, grandson of John Forbes White, who identified these characters.

glass quarries, within a frame of alternating light and dark green glass and that this frame was overpainted with flowers with angular petals with reddish-brown spines and gold centres.¹⁷ Cottier's refurbishment was to be enhanced some seven years later by the addition of painted monograms on the ceilings of these rooms, which were designed by George Reid.¹⁸

White commissioned Cottier to work at Seaton Cottage when Cottier was still in his early twenties and when he was, in all probability, still working for the Edinburgh firm, Field and Allan.¹⁹ Shortly afterwards, however, Cottier opened his own business in Glasgow, a bold move which may well have been encouraged by White who clearly admired his work and who was happy to recommend him to other members of his own family and friends. It was not all plain sailing, however, and White, whilst pleased with the architectural and glass work was, apparently dismayed by Cottier's choice of olive green for the walls, overpainted with a simple stencilled pattern. White, typically gave the artist free reign and soon came to admire the effect, allowing Cottier to continue similar stencilling work on some of the numerous pieces of furniture that White commissioned from him.²⁰

In about 1853-4 White moved into a flat at 15 Bon-Accord Square and in 1867 he took up residence at 269 Union Street.²¹ Cottier's work at Seaton Cottage had obviously been well received, for White instructed him to begin work on the interior of his town house soon after moving in. The house had been designed by Aberdeen's foremost architect, John Smith and was built for an advocate named Duncan Davidson. Davidson died in 1849 and the house was then taken on by his son, John Davidson, who kept it until White bought it in c.1867. The house was unusual in that it had a symmetrical frontage, was slightly set back from the street and was on a corner plot. In short, it was a simple but grand house in one of the best positions in Aberdeen. Cottier

¹⁷ Brian Gould Two van Gogh Contacts; -E.J. van Wisselingh, art dealer; Daniel Cottier, glass painter and decorator Naples Press, Bedford Park 1969 p 2.

¹⁸ The work was completed by 8 August 1867. George Reid to J.F. White 2 May and 8 August 1867. Cottier went on to produce a very similar scheme of roundels for a new church at Dowanhill, where portrait heads of biblical women were inserted in the windows under the gallery and biblical men in the north rose window. See Michael Donnelly Glasgow Stained Glass Glasgow 1981 p 10.

¹⁹ See Gould *op. cit.* p 1.

²⁰ Gould *op. cit.* p 2. The same green and gold stencilled pattern was discovered two years ago in the dining room of Bridgefield, near Seaton Cottage, which was the home of White's mother and was also extended and refurbished by Daniel Cottier.

refurbished the interior, supplying “elaborate furniture, much of it in the Flemish style....in very fine ebonised or stained mahogany, mainly black with elegant stencilled ornament, or a delicate amber colour with a graceful white stencil”.²² He installed an impressive fireplace and surround, embellished with painted tiles illustrating the months of the year that incorporated a portrait of Mrs White painted by George Reid.²³ Mrs White wore white and had a camellia at her breast. The whole project (which, except for the overmantel, is no longer extant) suggests the influence of William Morris and James McNeill Whistler in its overall concept of a harmonised and unified interior. White’s own classical leanings found physical presence in a life-size plaster cast of the Venus de Milo which he had bought in Paris some years before and placed in the hall of the Union Street house.²⁴ To a certain extent, the designs for the overmantel also have strong classical overtones which may also have been generated by White rather than by Cottier.

Once again Cottier’s work proved a triumph, the exceptional qualities of the interior (and the problems of realising such a scheme when employing a local decorator, Tom Baird) are heralded by George Reid who, in a letter to his patron, reveals his own evangelising spirit and belief in White’s judgement and taste;

My dear JFW

Just a word or two before you go. Every man is Tory and conservative on some point - you are no exception to the rule - wildly liberal in politics and in theology²⁵ - you are closely conservative and Tory in matters aesthetic. Your dealings with that “fat and drunken” master house painter proves this.

.....if you have a more beautifully decorated house than any other man in Aberdeen why should you keep it to yourself - or to the few friends you may choose to share its enjoyment with you?.... If you did rightly you would throw your house open to the whole of the house painters in Aberdeen - or in the North of Scotland if they wished it. Let them go and sit in it for a fortnight - let them study and consider and if needs be copy every bit of colour and detail about it - and let them do their best to reproduce it in every house they paint - you would be none the poorer,

²¹ The street was subsequently renumbered. The building is now 301 Union Street, The Halifax Building Society.

²² Fyfe & Minto John Forbes White, Miller, Collector, Photographer 1831-1904 Edinburgh 1970 p 11.

²³ This overmantel is now in the possession of White’s family but the portrait, which was painted in oils on canvas, is untraced.

²⁴ Fyfe & Minto *op. cit.* p 11.

²⁵ White evidently took his politics from his teacher Blackie who was an advanced Liberal and a supporter of agrarian radicalism. He went on to support the Crofter’s Act of 1886. See T.C. Smout A Century of the Scottish People 1830-1950 London 1986 p 253.

Cottier none the worse.... No you must make up your mind to be liberal in this matter too. If you had a splendid Veronese or Titian would you refuse to allow artists to study it?...why not allow him [a local decorator, Tom Baird] to study your furniture and curtains?... You will help to dispel the darkness and the prejudice and the Philistinism that exists and help on the better day for which the world is always - perhaps in vain - hoping.... If you see Cottier give him my love - the chimney pieces have just come and are being unpacked - the bits I have seen are beautiful.²⁶

White had also instructed Cottier to add a purpose-built gallery at the back of the house. This room, a double cube with top lighting, which was approached from the house by a small spiral staircase, appears on a map of the centre of Aberdeen of 1892. However, it was built earlier, some time after 1870, when another map reveals a smaller room with a semi-circular south end. The gallery was created to house a most remarkable collection of paintings, a collection that began with White's visit to the 1862 International Exhibition in London.

1.5 Gerrit Mollinger

Caw²⁷ lists John Forbes White collectively with R.T. Hamilton Bruce, James Donald, T. G. Arthur, J. Staats Forbes and Alexander Young as collecting in the 1870s and 1880s. In fact John Forbes White's collecting of Dutch paintings had begun some ten years earlier. At the International Exhibition of 1862 he bought a large landscape by the young artist Alexander Gerrit Mollinger (1836-1867) for £45, *Heath, Drenthe (North Holland)* (untraced). *Drenthe* was a bleak work, depicting a solitary woman wheeling a barrow across a stretch of moor. The line of the horizon was relieved by a clump of trees, while above it a great expanse of sky, full of clouds, took up much of the composition. In spite of Mollinger's preference for such bleak and unforgiving scenes, White was immediately drawn to his work.

White's immediate empathy with contemporary Dutch art might be explained by a number of factors relating to his education and cultural environment. Close trading and cultural links had existed between Aberdeen and the Low Countries for hundreds of years. For a merchant like White - used to foreign travel and no doubt

²⁶ George Reid to John Forbes White 26 August 1872.

²⁷ James L. Caw Catalogue of the Collection of Pictures of the British, French & Dutch Schools belonging to John Reid with notes by James Caw 1913 p vii.

coming into contact with the Dutch through his business links - such bonds and associations would have seemed quite normal. These close ties between the Low Countries with the north-east of Scotland were particularly strong at both of Aberdeen's universities around which much of White's social life revolved. Aberdeen students of law, for example, had traditionally completed their education at Leyden University. This was true of Edinburgh University too, but unlike other parts of eastern Scotland, the Aberdeen dialect included many Dutch words and the place names of the city of Aberdeen were also often rooted in Dutch and Flemish antecedents.

Both in subject matter and artistic style these Dutch paintings were close to White's heart. Scotland in the middle of the 19th century was a fast-changing and increasingly urbanised society. The nostalgia for country life and ennoblement of the peasant evinced in these pictures was a subject which was also being tackled in other media at this date, and most closely for White, by his friend William Alexander in his justly famous radical novel, written in the local "doric" dialect, Johnny Gibb of Gushetneuk.²⁸ For a photographer like White, the emphasis on tonality in these Dutch pictures must have seemed quite natural. His own photographs emphasised the melancholic side of nature; revealing it in soft focus, subdued tonalities and grainy texture.

In London, and later in The Netherlands, White bought the work of young artists, most of whom were either Dutch, Belgian or French. He was struck by the naturalism and lack of affectation in the work of these European artists. Compared to the historicism and anecdotal art then popular in Britain,²⁹ their work seemed fresh and very modern. Indeed it exhibited the same freshness and spontaneity which Blackie had taught him to appreciate in the art and literature of ancient Greece. The Greek artists too had depicted the world around them. It was the ancient Greeks' interest in their present – the depiction of their own culture, rather than the historical subjects that

²⁸ The story was first serialised locally between 1868-69. When it was published in book form in 1880 George Reid illustrated it with a series of characters which he based on the street vendors and country folk whom he could study on market day in Aberdeen.

²⁹ There were of course exceptions, most notably the Liverpool Pre-Raphaelites, such as Daniel Alexander Williamson, who were painting pure landscape, which was undoubtedly inspired by Barbizon artists such as Troyon, from the early 1850s. In Scotland too a few artists, such as E.T. Crawford, were already painting in the style of Dutch artists.

many Victorian artists and patrons preferred – that White wished modern artists to emulate.

Drenthe provided the impetus for White to develop close links with Mollinger and many other artists in The Netherlands for at this very early date he also began to meet and form lasting friendships with several Dutch artists. Over the next few years he visited Anton Mauve (1838-1888), Jozef Israels (1824-1911) and Mollinger's teacher, Willem Roelofs (1822-1897). He added works to his collections by these artists as well as numerous paintings by Johannes Bosboom (1817-1891),³⁰ perhaps the finest of which is the *Interior of The Bakenhuse, Haarlem*, now in the National Gallery, London (pl. 7).

Given these contacts it is understandable that when White turned his attentions to Reid's education, it was a natural choice to send him to The Netherlands rather than to England, where, up until then, most Scottish artists had usually gravitated.

1.6 Reid and James Cassie

George Reid, who was ten years White's junior, had already exhibited a great technical mastery and ability to draw. He had completed two years at the Trustees Academy, but in spite of his exposure to Edinburgh artists, Reid's principal artistic mentor up to this point had continued to be a family friend, James Cassie (1819-1879). Cassie was a fine artist but one influenced to a large degree by Aberdeen's most famous artist to date, William Dyce (1806-1864) and, through Dyce's work, by the Pre-Raphaelites. Cassie's art was one of meticulous realism - decorative and decorous landscapes, where genteel figures were added only to form a rarefied, elegant focal point. Reid's earliest landscape paintings reveal very clearly his debt to Cassie. In subject, composition, format, treatment and mood Cassie's work is recalled.

Reid's reliance on Cassie's methods at this early date in his career can be clearly illustrated by his description of a sketch he had made whilst on a tour of Stonehaven, Bridge of Drum and Edzell when he was accompanied by another artist, James May (fl. 1855-1879);

The sketch of the waterfall bothered me a good deal. It is no easy subject to make a picture of - it seems to want completeness, that

³⁰ Harrower John Forbes White Edinburgh 1918 p 35.

necessary element of human interest. I fear [it] cannot be introduced, without this a picture cannot be complete.³¹

Clearly the anecdotal - the element of human interest - was still at this stage important to Reid.

1.7 George Reid and John Everett Millais

Cassie encouraged Reid to look to English Art and, to this end, in 1864, the two artists visited the Royal Academy Annual Exhibition together. As well as visiting the exhibition Cassie and Reid also called on expatriate Scots John Pettie (1839-93), W.Q. Orchardson (1832-1910) and Tom Graham (1840-1906) at their quarters in Fitzroy Square. On his return to Aberdeen Reid wrote a review of the exhibition for The Aberdeen Herald, which was published on 18th June 1864. In spite of the fact that this was Reid's first visit to The Royal Academy (and indeed to London) he writes in a surprisingly confident tone, which suggests that he is a critic of many years standing. The review offers an insight into his taste in art at this very early stage in his career (he was twenty-two). Throughout the article he emphasises his desire for change, which he mentions in the first sentence;

[the Royal Academy] is yet well at work in improving its conditions and prospects, and ridding itself of the old *incubi* of conventionality, ignorance and vulgarity.³²

Reid draws particular attention to the work of John Everett Millais (1829-1896), who had been elected to full membership of the Academy the year before. Whilst agreeing with the censures of other critics regarding *Leisure Hours* (Detroit Institute of Arts) and *Charlie is my Darling* (James Reiss) as not being worthy successors to *Ophelia* (Tate Gallery), *The Huguenot* (M.O.M.A. New York) and *The Order of Release* (Tate Gallery), he nevertheless admires Millais for the fluidity of paint, rich impasto and handling which had emerged in his work at the beginning of the 1860s and for his:

unrivalled broad masterly treatment, power of handling, and richness, beauty, and delicacy of colour.³³

³¹ George Reid to John Forbes White 10 May 1865.

³² Aberdeen Herald 18 June 1864.

³³ *Ibid.*

Reid maintains that Millais' reputation is upheld by one painting alone, *My Second Sermon* (Guildhall Art Gallery, London). This now famous painting had at first been rejected by the committee on the grounds that it was a plagiarism of *The First Sermon* (also Guildhall Art Gallery, London), the pair to Millais' work which had been exhibited the previous year. So struck was Reid by this painting (and presumably its pair) that, on his return to Aberdeen, he set about painting his own pair of "sermon" pictures - church interiors which feature children as their subject.

Millais had set his two paintings in the parish church of Kingston upon Thames, where his parents lived. Reid also chose his family's place of worship - St Machar's Cathedral in Old Aberdeen - and went further, using various members of his family as models for the congregation. In the first painting, *The Orphan* (AAG pl. 8) a young barefooted girl, who is evidently too poor to pay the fee for the use of a pew, sits on the stairs. She distracts the attention of a young boy (whom Reid modelled on his youngest brother Sam) who has dropped his hymn book. Beside Sam sits Reid's maternal grandmother, and, in the pew behind her, Reid's father. In the second watercolour, *An Attentive Hearer of The Word* or *The Pulpit Stair* (AAG pl. 9)³⁴ an old woman (again Reid's grandmother) sits listening attentively to the sermon, her green umbrella resting against the stone pillar. In one of the pews sits Reid's sister, Agnes and, beside her, the corpulent figure of James Cassie, whilst Sam, almost hidden by the deep boxing, peeps over the edge of the pew door.³⁵

Both watercolours display a minute attention to detail and a delight in the techniques of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Both the sitters and the decorative woodwork give the artist the opportunity to recreate the different textures of wood, flagstone, costume and skin, painted in thinly-applied watercolour washes, which echo the thin glazes of oil paint used by Millais in his two paintings. The sweetly-sentimental aspect of Millais' work is also recreated here with a story of some sort - or at least some sort of social comment - suggested if not delineated. Reid exhibited *The Orphan* at the Royal Scottish Academy in 1865 and its pair, *An Attentive Hearer* the following year. Also in 1866 he showed his largest and most impressive landscape to date,

³⁴ This painting was reproduced for the frontispiece of *Logan's Collections* edited by James Cruickshank, Third Spalding Club, Aberdeen 1916.

³⁵ Journal of Mia Reid Volume II p 51. Since then the Cathedral has been restored and the old pews and stairs removed.

Spynie Palace and Loch (AAG). The painting, which displayed a new confidence and skill, was hung on the line and warmly received, particularly by the academicians:

On the "touching up day" Horatio McCulloch who at that time was considered the best landscape painter in Scotland saw the picture and admired it. He thought however that one of the beams of yellow light just behind the old castle was out of tone. Inquiry was made as to whether the young artist was present but as he could not be found. McCulloch after speaking to two or three others as to the propriety of the act, took his own palette and brushes and changed the colour of the defective part. This little incident was much talked about at the time, there being a difference of opinion as to the propriety of McCulloch's act, but GR thought that it was kindly intended, and that McCulloch had done him a good turn, though GR was an utter stranger to him.³⁶

No doubt Reid wisely calculated that for McCulloch to bother with his painting was good in itself, whatever the propriety of his actions. Reid was only twenty-three years old but he was already finding a secure footing in Scotland's established art world. His work was being hung in the most sought-after positions and commented on by academicians. This cosy position did not suit White, however. He wanted to promulgate his preference for realist art, to change how and what most Scottish artists of Reid's generation were painting. He was determined to open him up to the possibilities of Realism and to instil in him an understanding of the importance of tonality rather than colour, the peasant over the gentry, the honest sky and flat lands of Dutch art rather than the romanticised hills and glens of Scotland.

1.8 George Reid goes to The Netherlands

Using his new contacts in the Netherlands, White arranged to send Reid to study with Gerrit Mollinger³⁷ and to follow this with a period of study in Paris, under the history painter Adolphe Yvon (1817-1893). Thus it was that on 30th July 1866 Reid left Aberdeen for Utrecht. The crossing by sea took four days. Reid was met at the station in Utrecht by Mollinger and his elderly father, both of whom were alarmed to discover that Reid could not speak French. With no *lingua franca*, communication proved to be a problem over the two months Reid stayed with them. Mollinger spoke a

³⁶ Mia Reid *op. cit.* pp 52-3.

³⁷ White may have originally intended for Reid to study under Israels, which he was to do a few years later. Just a few months earlier, however, on 31 March 1866, the Israels' third child, Rebecca, had died. This may explain why Reid went to study with Mollinger rather than with Israels.

little English but a simple suggestion for more use of broken tone necessitated breaking a stick in order to understand what was meant. Reid was understandably home sick and lonely in spite of friendly attention from the Mollinger family. Mollinger himself was already suffering from the consumption that had already killed his brother. He had recently returned from Menton on the French Riviera where he had gone in an attempt to alleviate the condition but had been frustrated by the southern landscape because of what he saw as its "lack of atmosphere" - clear skies and high mountains did not appeal. He was working on one such view when Reid arrived, but turned happily to accompanying Reid on a sketching tour of the Dutch countryside, and on visits to the major cities and art galleries.

Whilst Reid was in The Netherlands, White used him to negotiate with his Dutch artist friends. White sent him to Jacob Maris (1837-1899) to try to buy one of his landscapes. Hearing that Maris was under contract to supply a dealer with all his work, he offered to settle with the dealer and release the painter. Through White another Dutch artist, Israels' most important follower, Adolphe David Artz (1837-1890) was introduced to Daniel Cottier who went on to function as his dealer, obtaining commissions for him.³⁸ Clearly White's interest in art was already going beyond that of private collecting. With no apparent wish for financial gain he was putting himself into the position of a dealer; bringing back groups of pictures from The Netherlands and selling them on to his friends and acquaintances. This pattern was to continue and was to affect profoundly taste and purchasing in Scotland for years to come.³⁹

Reid's letters to White over these months are warm, appreciative and extremely detailed. Reid and White - both great admirers of Rembrandt - communicated at length on the paintings Reid saw on these visits. Reid sent to his patron small sketches of the landscape, accompanied by lengthy descriptions of the countryside and the people whom he met.

³⁸ George Reid to John Forbes White 28 August 1868.

³⁹ White's abilities to persuade his friends of the strengths of such paintings were not matched elsewhere. The British dealer Ernest Gambart, for example, tried unsuccessfully to sell the work of Jozef Israels in the United States of America at this time. See Dekkers Jozef Israels 1824-1911 Groningen 1999 p 26.

Mollinger was only five years older than Reid, yet, perhaps surprisingly, it was not with Mollinger's master Roelofs (whom White also knew) that White attempted to arrange tutoring for his protégé. This decision found approval with Reid;

Mollinger's master Rolofs [sic] is to be here about the end of the month and I will likely see him - one or two of his pictures I have seen in the house of M^{ser} Loren van Themaat an advocate, and great friend of Mollinger - but it seems to me that (to use a vulgar phrase) Jack is as good as his master, or nearly so.⁴⁰

Reid was extremely taken by the quality of the Dutch artists' work and particularly by their training in comparison to what he had learnt at the Trustees Academy;

...it seems to me that the education of the artists here is far more thorough and solid than with us - nothing comes amiss to them - cattle, sheep, figures & c. - all are equally well done.⁴¹

He was more ambivalent about the landscape:

I have no great admiration for Dutch landscape generally - *bits* here and there are fine but it is continually merging into the formal - this sort of thing meets you at every turn. However, there are exceptions.⁴²

Yet in spite of his reservations Reid's revelation of the importance of tone over colour was as profound as Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus, and can be likened to a similar event in the life of the artist George Moore when he literally stumbled on Corot in the woods near Paris in 1873 and had his eyes opened to the possibilities of tonality.⁴³ The effect of Reid's stay in The Netherlands was to have a similar effect. Whilst there he worked on several paintings, some of which he had already sketched in before leaving Scotland. One of them, entitled *Willows by the Water Courses* (untraced) was exhibited at the Royal Scottish Academy the following year and another of *Dunblane Cathedral* (AAG pl. 10) was exhibited the year after. Both paintings exhibited a new style for Reid who used thick paint, emphasised tonality

⁴⁰ George Reid to John Forbes White 10 May 1865.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² George Reid to John Forbes White 6 August 1866.

⁴³ See Kenneth McConkey "'Silver Twilights" and "Rose Pink Dawns"' *J.B. Corot Exhibition Catalogue Japan 1989* p 31.

rather than colour and changed his subject matter, with the landscape dominating and the figures (common working people) now subordinate to this landscape. By the time Reid returned to Scotland his own art had changed beyond recognition. White had achieved his purpose - of converting a young and impressionable Scottish artist to the doctrines of the foreign school.

In May 1867 White and Reid travelled to Paris to see the Salon and the Great International Exhibition. They called on Artz and Mollinger, who were sharing lodgings in Montmatre. The four friends spent time together, visiting galleries and exhibitions. After four days in Paris Reid and White continued on to Rouen. In London Reid met up with various members of his family who were themselves returning from visiting the family of his older brother James, who had died four months earlier. Reid returned to Aberdeen with his brother's widow and her four children, all of whom were now his responsibility. The extra pressure on Reid's finances provoked a necessary increase in his production of portraits, which were, over the next decade, to become his main output and to provide his principal income.

Later the same year White visited Artz again, this time with his wife, and through Reid arranged for Artz's pictures to come to Edinburgh for exhibition.⁴⁴ He himself bought an oil painting of a mother and child and within a year had persuaded his friends James Walker and Alexander Macdonald to do likewise. Artz's painting *Mother's Joy* (AAG) was exhibited at the Royal Scottish Academy the following year by which time it was already in the possession of Walker. Artz himself visited Scotland in May and June 1869, thus further cementing his already strong friendship with George Reid and John Forbes White.

By the late 1860s there had been - in Aberdeen at least - a complete sea-change in terms of artistic style and taste. Artists were painting in a Realist style and their works were being bought readily by an eager group of collectors.

In 1869 when Reid was writing to White from Paris on the subject of paintings that White and another Aberdeen collector, Alexander Macdonald of Kepplestone, now owned, he revealed the truly revolutionary principles of the new art:

By the way, speaking of the pictures at Kepplestone reminds me of the two specimens of Clays work - there and at 296 [sic] Union Street I never feel the absolute truthfulness of these two pictures - so much as I have done

⁴⁴ David Artz to George Reid 27 October 1867.

here during the past two weeks. The mornings have been very clear and hot and the sun has risen through a cloudless sky - going along to the atelier at 8 o'clock towards the suburbs where the streets and houses get a little more open - the effects are sometimes very delightful - in the Rue Perignon for example there are some high - narrow white washed houses - and curiously enough every morning I see them with the bright morning sun lightening them up and the curious warm fiery atmosphere behind them to the west, those two pictures of Clays come to my mind directly. It is simply an impression of tone as the forms are quite different, but as time, it is Clays to a T. You would recognise your picture in it at a glance I am sure - and this I think shows that the first and strangest thing that appeals to me in looking at Nature is this gamut of tone - it makes without doubt the most overpowering impression - all other things such as form and detail come in as the mere accessories....

and he concludes:

Mollinger's idea of always getting if possible what is called "the impression of the moment" has a deeper meaning than I thought.⁴⁵

Reid's emphasis on tone, impressions and effects show how far he had moved in his understanding of the pre-requisites of a good painting from his belief, expressed only four years earlier, when the human element had been vital.

1.9 The Doctrine Delivered by "Veri Vindex"

By 1873 Reid was castigating all that had gone before - Pre-Raphaelite art was anathema and William Dyce, in particular, now met with the severest reprobation;

It is a gross mistake to say that Dyce is the most intellectual of Aberdeen artists - His best pictures are but reproductions of other men's thoughts the catching up of echoes is not the merit of intellect - but he belonged to the upper class and that's enough perhaps after he left Aberdeen - I see no merit in his work that marks it to be his - He became a mere imitator in art as he was a snob among men.⁴⁶

Unfortunately the established academicians were equally scathing about Reid's work on his return from The Netherlands, seeing in it the same plagiarism as Reid had seen in Dyce's work. Reid's *Willows by the Water Courses* was hung, not on the line as *Spynie Palace and Loch* had been the previous year, but above a landscape by

⁴⁵ George Reid to John Forbes White 25 April 1869.

⁴⁶ George Reid to John Forbes White. Undated but the week following 28 August 1873.

Mollinger. According to Mia Reid⁴⁷ this was done by the Royal Scottish Academy's hanging committee to make a point - to illustrate how derivative Reid had become. His former champion Harvey was his severest critic, saying of the painting:

- you've made a most decided mistake in changing your style, - evidently been looking at nature through Mollinger's eyes - not your own - your large picture last year full of good promise - academicians look'd upon it so and so - McCulloch quite delighted with it - in my presence touched part of sky - then you were "an object of interest" - but now - "disappointed hopes" sorrowful academicians nothing he ever saw in nature - opaque, watery conventional.⁴⁸

Harvey and the other academicians had obviously admired Reid's earlier work and had felt that he showed great promise but that he was ruining his chances by following Mollinger. This is the same sort of criticism which Corot's work came up against when it first arrived in Britain for the way he would "scrub in a subject with dirt for colour".⁴⁹

Reid reported the incident to John Forbes White with glee and some scorn - he seemed to delight in this episode for he was now the rebel, the young man ready and willing to break away from the stranglehold of convention.

White and Reid's reply to such opinions came in the form of an anonymous pamphlet entitled Thoughts on Art and Notes on the Exhibition of the Royal Scottish Academy of 1868. They ascribed authorship to *Veri Vindex* - which one could translate as "the defender of truth". The pamphlet is not so much a review of the Royal Scottish Academy exhibition of 1868 (as its full title suggests) as a castigation of the established Scottish School and a creed on the correct path towards true art.

Highlighting the theme of parochialism of the Academy and the closed attitudes of the academicians, the pamphlet is prefaced with a quote from Saint Paul;

But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves are not wise.

Typically for White, the "Veri Vindex" treatise begins with an analysis of beauty set out in terms of comparison with Greek antecedents. Through the classicism of French art, the text then leads on to a study of the work of French contemporaries, including

⁴⁷ Journal of Mia Reid Volume II p 64.

⁴⁸ George Reid to John Forbes White 20 February 1867.

⁴⁹ The Art Journal 1867 p 169.

Reid's former master, Yvon. The highest approbation is reserved for "another phase of French character which is more human and noble." This is the art of the Realists, particularly J.J. Millet and Jules Breton. Throughout the pamphlet White's immense knowledge of art and art criticism is evident; he writes of Lessing, Goethe and Schiller. The art of the Nazarenes is criticised and, by implication, that of William Dyce, as hard and cold whilst that of William Hogarth is proclaimed the work of a genius. There is, appropriately from the hand of an artist who was already finding his greatest calling in portraiture, a long passage on portrait painting and its history in Scotland from George Jamesone to Sir John Watson Gordon. Thus thirteen pages of beliefs and tenets are laid out before the first picture in the exhibition is examined. When the paintings addressed are examined Reid and White are acerbic in their comments and in most cases fault is found. Of Herdman's portraits they write;

The question presently at stake, and which will decide the fate of our national school of portraiture is, whether the human face and form divine, or the work of the tailor, the milliner, and the upholsterer is to have pre-eminence. Mr Herdman, in this portrait of Mrs Shand, has declared for the latter.⁵⁰

Whilst Raeburn is praised MacNee is reviled. So as not to arouse suspicion, along with the work of George Paul Chalmers (1833-1878), that of Reid is also admired in moderate tones. History painting is damned outright as "the falsest of all painting" for "the primary qualities of art are sacrificed for the secondary, and the literary, dramatic or historical interest of the picture is put in the room and place of the artistic". If George Hay, for example, "would look a little nearer home, he would find subjects in the every-day-life around quite as interesting, and would escape the endless worry and bother of "getting up" properties and costumes". The depiction of Walter Scott is a "fruitless field". Instead the essential nature of a painting - not merely a story - is revealed as the true worth of art. Rich harmonies, soft tonalities - the capturing of mood is to be sought. For White such qualities are epitomised by the art of Corot and he is given praise, as is Sam Bough, for his mastery of air, space, sunshine and mist. Yet this depiction of true nature does not, for White and Reid, include "Caledonia, Stern and Wild". Magnificent scenery does not perforce create magnificent art and

⁵⁰ John Forbes White & George Reid (anonymously, as "*Veri Vindex*") Thoughts on Art and Notes on the Exhibition of the Royal Scottish Academy of 1868 Edinburgh 1868 p 17.

McCulloch's later landscapes are described as hard and conventional. The flat lands of The Netherlands are where great landscape painting has come from, declare the authors. They then go on to extol the contemporary Dutch artists, citing their friends Mollinger and Roelofs, amongst others, for their harmony of tone. French artists Daubigny, Courbet, Corot, Breton and Millet are listed as the best of landscape painters. In England the reader is encouraged to look to the work of George Mason (1817-1872) for his "exquisite poems in colour and tone" and to Whistler, "whose 'symphonies' are so little understood when seen among the glaring colours of The English School". Reid and White - for whom tonality was all - appreciate fully Whistler's art at this very early date,⁵¹ ten years before Ruskin was to accuse him of flinging a pot of paint in the public's face, and only four years after Rossetti had described the New French School as "simple putrescence and decomposition".⁵² The two do not shirk from describing a work of an academician as "a wretched daub" and boldly condemn the crowded hang, believing this to be of great detriment to each work in the exhibition.⁵³

In this eighty-five page diatribe the two authors set out the tenets of their beliefs. They use cheap witticisms but within the text there is set out quite explicitly a manifesto for change. Reid and White were - some twenty years before the "Glasgow Boys" and their supposed revelations on Realism - criticising what has since been termed "The Gluepot School" and advocating a European approach to art. Their views are closely aligned to those of Émile Zola who, in his essay on Manet of only six years earlier, had also set out a virtual manifesto for change, advocating a change in critics' priorities from concentrating on pictorial subject rather than on the manner of realisation.⁵⁴ Reid and White's manifesto prefigures Zola's hero of *L'Oeuvre* of 1886, Claude Lantier, whose obsession was to produce a painting that would blow up The Louvre. Reid and White wanted metaphorically to blow up their own bastion of conservative views, the Royal Scottish Academy. They were not alone. Edinburgh-

⁵¹ As did fellow Aberdonian John Phillip RA who three years earlier had bought (and was clearly influenced by) one of Whistler's first and finest paintings, *At The Piano* of 1858-9 (Taft Museum, Cincinnati).

⁵² William Rossetti *D.G Rossetti Letters and Memoirs* London 1895 Vol. II p 180 (letter dated 12 November 1864).

⁵³ This was two years before Degas addressed a letter to the Salon jury which was published in *Paris Journal* on the same subject.

based artists George Paul Chalmers, Hugh Cameron, George Manson and W.D. McKay were all following Reid's lead and in spite of the academicians' fears and protestations, Reid was now the champion of what he perceived to be a revolutionary movement. He was diametrically opposed to what had gone before and like Zola he was very happy to define the difference between the artists whom he saw as painting truthful art (the Courbets and Manets of Scottish art) against the false mediocrity of others (the equivalent of Cabanal, Bouguereau and other Salon favourites). Realism had, as early as 1868, arrived in Scotland.

1.10 George Reid in Paris

In the Spring of 1869, despite ever-present financial constraints,⁵⁵ Reid journeyed once again to Paris. Whilst there he was kept informed of all the ructions and debates relating to his unconventional paintings. One of his closest allies was the poet George Macdonald⁵⁶ whose wife acted as one of his informers;

I told you I had a long letter from Mrs Macdonald the other day - she and G McD had been at a party at Archer's house in London some days since - and had met McWhirter and some more of them - they had got talking about pictures and the Edin Ex. and here is an extract from the letter "Mr Archer told me that your Peat Moss is the best landscape in the S. Academy - I was so pleased to hear them talking so warmly about it. McWhirter praised it very highly too only he is a little sorry you have such a great liking for the French School" Well I am afraid McWhirter's idea are thoroughly representative of those of the RSA - and I fear that there is trouble in store for me again. My journey to Mollinger has never been forgotten - nor quite forgiven and as they know I am here it will help to keep the sore open - It is a pity but it can't be helped.....⁵⁷

Nor was Reid the only artist to suffer at the hands of the Royal Scottish Academy hanging committee;

⁵⁴ This quoted from Zola's final article for L'Evenement 11 May 1866, reprinted as a booklet later in 1866 under the generic title Mon Salon.

⁵⁵ George Reid to John Forbes White 28 March 1869 (see Appendix A).

⁵⁶ George Macdonald (1824-1905) author of children's books and Scottish stories, was born in Huntly. He was a collector and connoisseur of art and a close friend of John Ruskin. Reid stayed with him on several occasions when in London and painted his portrait in 1868. The introduction to Macdonald had probably come from White's brother-in-law, William Geddes, who had been at University with Macdonald.

⁵⁷ George Reid to John Forbes White 28 March 1869.

They know Dun⁵⁸ had come over here six months since - and this year one of his pictures was rejected and the other skied in the condemned cell - this is their mode of treating one of the oldest students in their life school and the winner of the Stuart prize.....⁵⁹

Yet throughout Reid remained ever hopeful of change;

I was sure your wrath would be kindled with the sight of the Edin Exn. and that like another St Paul your spirit would be stirred within when you saw the "City wholly given to idolatry - to the senseless worship of certain golden calves - who shall remain nameless - but to what good does it all serve?...[they] are not to be hurled from their pinnacles by the scorching or bitter blasts of anonymous pamphleteers..... But I am not without some hope that a change for the better may come even in Edinburgh - but it must come from the young fellows - I believe after a man is once made an associate there - he is bound hand and foot to them for life - and that any radical change in his way of thinking or working becomes impossible. - But I am equally certain that whoever does lead the opposition party will suffer for it - there are already pretty decided indications of this - I think I told you of what I had leaked of McWhirter's sentiments and the other week Dun had a letter from McKay in which much the same thing was repeated - only coming from headquarters instead - However there is always one consolation left "if they refuse to receive you in the one place you can turn aside to another" - London is not such a great distance off as it once was.⁶⁰

Reid did indeed go on to exhibit regularly in London, but his main ambition was to achieve success in Scotland and to change and improve the art of his own country.

This is revealed by his rather tongue-in-cheek postscript to this letter;

If I should go there [The Netherlands] again it will likely be for a month's sketching - but at present the idea of exhibiting any foreign subject must be given up - so far as Edinburgh at least is concerned...it would be the last drop that would make the cup run over - I must be intensely Scotch in my subjects next year.⁶¹

Reid stayed on in Paris until May, so as to be able to view the 4230 works exhibited at the Salon that year. He wrote White a lengthy epistle on his favourite paintings. Generally Reid admires the education and artistic discipline of the French artists. He divides the French School into the good and the bad. In the bad group he lists the artists who paint historical or anecdotal pictures, amongst them his former

⁵⁸ John Dun exhibited over 100 works at the Royal Scottish Academy between 1863-1908 but his career did not hold out the promise for which Reid credited him.

⁵⁹ George Reid to John Forbes White 28 March 1869.

⁶⁰ George Reid to John Forbes White 25 April 1869.

teacher Yvon and also Gérôme (whom he felt was having far too much influence on the younger artists). His favourites are Breton and Daubigny, though he sees a falling off in Daubigny's work as compared to two years before. He recommends that White - who had evidently wished to acquire a work by Gérôme - should abandon such plans. Of Breton's *Procession en Bretagne* (Museum of Fine Art, Havana, Cuba) he writes "I cannot find words enough to express my admiration for this picture - it is simply magnificent". The artist's ability to capture the varied characters of the figures, the tonality, shadows, all meet with his approval. "I do wish you could see it, you would go into raptures over it".⁶²

It is worth remembering that here Reid is writing to his mentor White and perhaps concentrating on the artists whom he knows White would like. Reid, who remained throughout his life more conservative than White in matters both political and artistic, seems still to have trouble coming to terms with the freedom and modernity of French art. He finds some of the work almost childlike and lacking "those delicate and charming qualities of colour and execution which one naturally expects to find along with such excellence in design and drawing".⁶³

1.11 Alexander Macdonald

The year before his visit to Utrecht George Reid met for the first time, on 1st May 1865, a young and enthusiastic collector of contemporary art, Alexander Macdonald (1837-1884)⁶⁴. Like White, Macdonald's money had come from the business endeavours of his father, also Alexander, who had re-invented the process of polishing granite - a technique lost since Egyptian times.⁶⁵ George Reid detested polished granite⁶⁶ yet he saw in Macdonald a man with money and an interest in the Arts. He saw also a potential patron whose tastes, he may have thought, could be

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² George Reid to John Forbes White 9 May 1869.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Journal of Mia Reid Volume I p 51.

⁶⁵ Alexander Macdonald the elder, had moved from Foss, in Perthshire where he had been born in 1794, to Aberdeen in the 1820s. In about 1829 he became aware of the examples of polished Egyptian granite which had been gifted to the British Museum by Giovanni Belzoni. Macdonald introduced a steam polishing machine into his granite works (before this time all granite had been worked mechanically). By 1832 he had installed his first polished grave stone at Kensall Green Cemetery in London, thus starting a veritable craze for urns and cylindrical forms in this material which, over the next sixty years, came to grace graveyards and houses throughout Britain.

⁶⁶ George Reid and William Robertson Smith Notes and Sketches Aberdeen p 15.

developed and nurtured as his own were being by his contact with White and through him, with his Dutch contemporaries.

Quite how Macdonald first became interested in buying paintings is not known. His tastes at the outset of his collecting, in the early 1860s, were typical of the period and of his own social background. As a wealthy industrialist Macdonald bought cautiously paintings by established artists, many of them Royal Academicians. He bought more paintings from the Royal Academy than from the Royal Scottish Academy, though many of the artists whom he befriended and patronised were expatriot Scots; Orchardson was a particular favourite. Macdonald was invited to the annual dinners at The Royal Academy and was seen as a jovial, sympathetic character, and perhaps pitied for his disabilities which necessitated the use of a wheelchair.

Whilst on the surface the relationship between White, Reid and Macdonald appears to have been amicable, Reid was privately critical to White of Macdonald's artistic taste and related social aspirations. These aspects of Macdonald's character were always to rile Reid and as late as 1880 he wrote;

I have heard from various sources that M[acdonald] is going to the RA dinner again. The news seems to have been propagated with much diligence.⁶⁷

Reid was critical too of Macdonald's preference for anecdotal art. Writing to White of the 1869 Salon;

I am sure Macdonald with his ideas of subject would find the place a perfect paradise - there is literally no end of that sort of thing.⁶⁸

Reid was equally disapproving of Macdonald's Scottish purchases. Reid's principal objection seems to be on price;

You will doubtless have seen Macdonald e'er now - has he told you about his buying Orchardson's picture for £400 "with a luckpenny off" as he says - well that is what I call doing the thing".⁶⁹

Again one senses a sneering disdain for what Macdonald buys and for the emphasis he puts on price. Reid also disliked the way Macdonald was proprietorial about his own pictures;

⁶⁷ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 24 April 1880.

⁶⁸ George Reid to John Forbes White 25 April 1869.

⁶⁹ George Reid to John Forbes White 24 July 1870. Reid is referring to *Toilers of the Sea* (Aberdeen Art Gallery) which was exhibited at the Royal Academy that year.

Mac's dog-in-the-manger attitude made it impossible for me to let you have it - nor would he have it himself. He was amazed because he did not get "Broadsea" - and when he saw "B... Gutt" he thought it too like Israel's work (and indeed there was reason - for a good deal of it is Israel's work - rather than mine) and if he had heard that you had got it as well as Broadsea I should have been overwhelmed with reproaches and reflections of all kinds. So I let a dealer have it for £50 - and he ne'er shed a tear - and I painted "Jedburgh" for him to make up for his loss of "Broadsea".⁷⁰

Conversely Reid was overwhelmed by White's generosity;

You cast money away from you like a prodigal - the price you have fixed on "Broadsea" is more than it is worth at least so it seems to me - Alice's portrait was paid for long ago.⁷¹

White meanwhile, acknowledged Macdonald's failings but expressed dismay rather than disdain (as, some forty years later, were others to feel of James Murray's collecting, see Chapter 7);

I feel obliged to admit having felt what you say about Macdonald - I had hoped his love of pictures and patronage of art came from the inner man, but I am afraid he is yet beyond the porch - whether he will ever come in I doubt much, as he is evidently on the way back - I was lately disgusted to find that he had been talking to some character about the large sums he was paying for pictures - I spoke to him after and cautioned him about the folly of it, but I fear it is too much his way and I rather fear he exaggerates the sums to spike awe into the minds of some of his victims.⁷²

Nevertheless, with his typical missionary zeal White was attempting to transform the tastes of Macdonald, as he was ultimately to affect those of many other collectors and artists in Scotland. No doubt encouraged by White (although perhaps out of pity or admiration for the artist) Macdonald bought Reid's *Loch Tummel* (AAG) and was to continue to be a faithful patron and friend to him until his death some twenty years later.

By 1869 Macdonald had a collection which even Reid could admire;

I am sure that when he [the artist Sam Bough] has seen the kind of pictures that Macdonald has in his house he will do his best for him - to make his work worthy of such good companionship - he won't dare to "pot boil" in this case.⁷³

⁷⁰ George Reid to John Forbes White 20 September 1891.

⁷¹ George Reid to John Forbes White. Undated.

⁷² John Forbes White to George Reid 17 September 1868.

⁷³ George Reid to John Forbes White 25 April 1869

Thus it was that some ten years after White bought his first Dutch painting there was in Aberdeen an art world in microcosm, with a connoisseur and arbiter of taste in White, Reid, an artist who could execute his ideas and Macdonald who had the money to buy the paintings produced.

CHAPTER 2

The Struggle for Realism 1867-1873

2.1 The Death of Alexander Gerrit Mollinger

Both John Forbes White and George Reid held Alexander Gerrit Mollinger in the highest esteem, both as an artist and as a man. He in turn seemed to value their friendship and admiration of his work. In 1865, when the already consumptive Mollinger had first journeyed to the French Riviera, White had provided him with a letter of introduction to his brother-in-law, who was a doctor and who was staying at the time in Nice. Mollinger wrote to White of how gratified he was by the reception his work had found in Scotland, signing off as White's "devoué et sincère sêrviteur et ami".¹

By the time of White's second Parisian visit of 1867 Mollinger had already left for Menton, where the air was thought to be better for his consumption, but this was to prove futile and less than a month later, at the age of thirty-four, Mollinger died. Reid wrote the obituary for *The Scotsman*.² In it he outlined Mollinger's popularity in Scotland. In spite of the fact that Mollinger had been exhibiting his work in Scotland for only three years, he had come to be known and appreciated by several Scottish collectors. His work had been bought by White and Macdonald, but also by Sir David Baxter and several other noted Scottish collectors. At the funeral Israel's oration included the following eulogy: "Had our friend but lived he would have founded a new school of landscape painting in Holland".³ In reality he had, under the ægis of White, done exactly that in Scotland, having, as he did, a far greater effect on Scottish landscape painting than any of his Dutch friends were to have over subsequent years. Reid's landscape painting changed as a direct result of his association with Mollinger. G.P. Chalmers and Hugh Cameron were also influenced to change their painting style by being shown Mollinger's work in the homes of patrons such as John Forbes White and Alexander Macdonald. All three artists came to adopt Mollinger's very particular type of elegiac, solemn landscape. Reid's *Evening* of 1873 (Dundee Art Gallery),

¹ Alexander Gerrit Mollinger to John Forbes White 19 October 1865.

² Published 24 September 1867 (see Appendix A).

³ Journal of Mia Reid Vol. II p 79.

Chalmers' *End of the Harvest* (Skibo Castle) and Cameron's *Gleaners Returning* of 1881 (Dundee, Orchar Collection) deal with the subject of entirely unglamourised farm workers set in a bleak and forbidding landscape. Such art has its roots not in Scottish Victorian Art but in the paintings of Gerrit Mollinger.

White's attempts to promote the art of Mollinger did not end with Mollinger's death. If anything they increased. Shortly after the artist's death, White cleared his studio, bringing back its entire contents to disseminate in Scotland. Thus it was that Mollinger, one of the youngest artists of The Hague School came, during his short life and after his death, to exert a great influence on his Scottish contemporaries.⁴ The art of George, Archy and Sam Reid, George Paul Chalmers, William McTaggart, Hugh Cameron and W.D. McKay and indeed numerous other Scottish - and a little later English - artists was to change beyond recognition as a result of this influx of Dutch art. In landscape the emphasis on the horizontal and preference for flat landscape came to dominate the composition. Peasant figures replaced gentlemen fishing and hunting. The harsh aspects of peasant life were depicted rather than a romanticised rural idyll. Tonality replaced bright colour and autumn and winter were preferred over summer. Finally the use of pure oil changed the physical appearance of the paintings these artists produced, giving texture and force to the work. All these features came to these young Scottish artists from Mollinger's most influential paintings. Through White's actions the tastes and interests of many collectors in Scotland - who had no direct contact with The Hague School themselves - was opened up to the Realism that was just beginning to sweep through Europe at that time. This effect was almost wholly due to the intervention and encouragement of White, whose actions in promoting the art of Mollinger had gone far beyond personal acquisition or profiteering.

2.2 William Darling McKay RSA

In his history of the Royal Scottish Academy the artist, dealer and writer W.D. McKay (1844-1924) acknowledges the debt Scottish landscape artists owed to Gerrit Mollinger, realising that it was through him that French Realism reached Scotland.⁵ McKay does not acknowledge White as the lynch-pin of this sea-change (nor even

⁴ Far more than he did in The Netherlands, where he is viewed as a relatively minor artist.

⁵ W.D. McKay History of the Royal Scottish Academy p XCI.

Reid) but instead chooses to mention, rather ambiguously, "a Haddington farmer". This farmer was Douglas Murray, of Long Yester, Haddington⁶ who bought a painting by Mollinger from the Royal Scottish Academy in 1865. McKay also lived in Haddington. He knew Murray and indeed painted on his land.⁷ McKay, writing fifty years after the events, no doubt preferred to see the movement towards Realism as an Edinburgh or Haddington-based phenomenon and one in which he and Murray played a very active part. Certainly there is evident in McKay's own work a similar transformation as in that of Reid. McKay and his artistic circle were to take on board the new subject matter and treatment, thus changing perceived views and tastes in the Edinburgh area, and influencing a younger generation in the west. Their preoccupation with peasant life, their subdued tonalities and expansive landscape settings were very much in the style of their Dutch and French counterparts and undoubtedly they were influenced by artists such as Mollinger. They could have seen his art as early as 1865 when it was first exhibited in Edinburgh and the change in their art takes place almost exactly when Mollinger's work began to be exhibited. Writers who wish to confirm McKay's importance in the movement point to his visit to The Netherlands which Macmillan describes as "early on".⁸ However it was not in fact until 1873 that McKay visited Jozef Israels and David Artz.⁹ The letter of introduction to Artz (and most probably to Israels) came from White.¹⁰ There can be no doubt that McKay, who was several years younger than George Reid, was influenced by Reid's new landscape style; the low horizons, horizontal format and subdued tonalities which followed Reid's stay with Mollinger in 1866. He was also affected by Mollinger's work, which was exhibited in Scotland from 1865 entirely because of White's commitment to it. The clearly anecdotal paintings submitted by McKay to the Royal Scottish Academy Summer exhibitions, *The Broken Sprig* (RSA 1864) and *The Problem* (RSA 1865) are replaced almost overnight by *November Landscape* (1867) *Yester Avenue*, *Autumn* (RSA 1869) and *Harvest* (RSA 1870), works whose titles - and the subject matter suggested by them - quite clearly reveal the debt to Mollinger and Reid. Reid's

⁶ I am indebted to Joanna Soden for the identification of this farmer.

⁷ As did George Reid. He painted *Yester Farm, Evening* (which belonged to Douglas Murray in 1868) and exhibited *Haddington* at the Royal Scottish Academy in 1868.

⁸ Duncan Macmillan *Scottish Art 1460-1990 Mainstream* 1990 p 254.

⁹ He was accompanied by George Manson (1850-1876).

¹⁰ David Artz to John Forbes White Paris 22 June 1873 (see Appendix A).

frequent visits to his friend the Rev. Thomson in Haddington¹¹ allowed an exchange between the two groups of artists and collectors. White certainly encouraged McKay, and owned several of his paintings.¹² McKay's debt to Reid is intimated in a letter to Reid written by the Rev. Thomson who remarks on how well McKay's painting has progressed since Reid's last visit to Haddington, whilst at the same time comparing McKay's work unfavourably with that of Reid.¹³

Whether White's role was ignored or merely overlooked by McKay in his most influential book - one of the first to analyse the history of Scottish Art - its omission has undoubtedly gone some way to obscuring the role White played in the introduction of Realism into Scotland. Later writers, no doubt influenced by McKay's views, suggested that McKay was the leader of this movement of depicting working people on the land.¹⁴ Paintings such as Reid's *Evening* give ample proof that this was not the case. McKay's much later version of events mentions White only in passing, and then with reference to Corot (see Chapter 3). The fundamental part that he played in the introduction of Realism into Scotland was thus virtually ignored until over one hundred years after the events.

2.3 George Mason

Throughout the early 1870s the relationship between Reid and White remained very close. Through Reid, White would realise his own artistic ambitions and see a physical manifestation of his theories and ideas.¹⁵ In subsequent years - as their financial situations were to change - Reid's fame increasing and White's fortunes declining, his personal life beset by mental illness and other worries - their relationship was to become much more distant. At this early stage in their careers, however, White was evidently determined to continue to influence the course of Reid's career - and

¹¹ The Rev Thomson was a member of Old Deer Club (see James Morrison "William Robertson Smith and the Academy of Old Deer" *William Robertson Smith - Essays in Reassessment* Edited by William Johnstone Sheffield University Press 1995 pp 55-59.) A famed raconteur, Dr John Brown called him Rev. Sancho Panza. He was an admirer of the work of Reid and Chalmers. He died in Haddington in 1890.

¹² *Spring* - a ploughing scene - which was lent to Royal Scottish Academy 1872, *End of the Harvest* which is described by White's daughter in her biography of her father and *A Farm near Haddington*, which appeared in White's painting sale of 1888.

¹³ Rev. Thomson to George Reid 14 April 1869. (see Appendix A).

¹⁴ See for example Macmillan *op. cit.* p 254.

¹⁵ John Forbes White to George Reid 17 September 1868 (see Appendix A).

that of many other Scottish artists - and to encourage Reid's contacts with their Dutch artist friends.

Early in 1869 Reid was again in Europe - this time with Israel's pupil David Artz who at the time was living in Paris. Throughout the visit Reid wrote to White, describing the work he saw, and Artz's work, in some detail. As well as painting copies of works in the Louvre and the Luxembourg, Reid also took note of the paintings of his friend Artz;

He is painting several little pictures just now - one of them - two children watching a lot of washing bleaching on an open common - stones laid out on the corners to keep them from blowing away - is particularly fine - just too like Israel's if anything.¹⁶

George Reid's contacts with European artists though, did not prevent him from admiring the work of some English artists. He made a point of visiting the Royal Academy summer exhibition every year and in June 1870 Reid was particularly struck by a small landscape by George Mason (1818-1872). This was *A Derbyshire Landscape* (Manchester City Art Gallery pl. 11) "He has only one picture in the RA" reported Reid, "a bit of landscape but it is quite a poem in its way - a few Derbyshire cottages, a tree or two - some clothes bleaching & a couple of figures - a dusky gloaming effect."¹⁷ Reid visited Mason's studio and invited him to stay at Seaton Cottage, in the sure knowledge that White would be delighted with such a visit.

Reid was not alone in his admiration of this painting. It was mentioned in The Art Review, The Illustrated London News, The Athenaeum, The Saturday Review, The Observer, and The Times.¹⁸ Though Mason had spent his formative years in Italy, he was generally admired by the 1870s for his recent English landscapes; bucolic idylls which are virtually the first examples of Realism in English Art. One critic eulogised over his "passion more intense and inspired ... than that of Jules Breton, conveyed by a method and manner that remind one at times of Daubigny".¹⁹ White too admired Mason's work, seeing in it similarities with the work of his French counterparts,

¹⁶ George Reid to John Forbes White 10 February 1869.

¹⁷ George Reid to John Forbes White 16 June 1870.

¹⁸ The Art Journal IX 1870 p 165, The Illustrated London News LVI 1870 p 503, The Athenaeum No 2218 1870 p 585, The Saturday Review XXX 1870 p 836, The Observer 22 May 1870 p 5 & The Times 6 May 1870 p 4.

¹⁹ Frederick Wedgmore Studies in English Art London 1876 p 216.

particularly Breton and Millet. The year after Mason's death in 1872 White wrote a long article on his work for The Contemporary Review.²⁰ The article provides a fascinating insight into White's own ideals in art, which he believed were epitomised by Mason's paintings. In the article he describes Mason's early Italian landscapes as thin and hard, with dark shadows and hot lights. He compares them unfavourably with the later paintings of Derbyshire and Staffordshire in which, White believes, Mason attains "harmonious completeness of Nature".²¹ He describes Mason's peasant figures as full of rustic grace and dignity of posture, far removed from the caricatured, ugly peasant type of some recent English art. Foretelling Lavery's efforts of ten years later, White declares that the figures on a cricket field are as graceful and worthy of depiction as any in a ballroom, for their movements are "more graceful, because more simple".²² Echoing the memorable words of Théophile Thoré who, reviewing the 1863 Salon des Refusés had written "the portrait of a worker in his smock is certainly worth as much as the portrait of a prince in his golden costume", he states that artists should turn - as Mason has done - to real, rather than imagined, figures for inspiration. With his classical ideals of beauty never far from his mind, White extols Mason's figures whose clothes, severe and simple, reveal rather than conceal the beauty of the human form. White also admires Mason's preference for dusk, though notes that he never approaches sentimental symbolism from such a subject by combining it with an aged figure; his peasants are instead always youthful and graceful. Mason's vision is a country idyll, but one firmly rooted in reality. White also extols Mason's rich application of paint and subdued tonalities, heightened by "refined touches of positive colour", a phrase which recalls Reid's belief expressed to White many years earlier when talking about the restrained and careful use of positive colour, that "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump".²³

For Reid the knowledge of Mason's *Derbyshire Landscape*, perhaps coupled with Artz's painting which he had seen the previous year, inspired him to paint a small oil sketch (AAG pl. 12 one of several versions) of two children, "lad and lass" bleaching washing on grass. Reid depicts the children on White's land (they may well

²⁰ John Forbes White "The Pictures of the late George Mason ARA" The Contemporary Review April 1873 pp 724-36.

²¹ *Ibid.* p 726.

²² *Ibid.* p 727.

²³ George Reid to John Forbes White August 1866.

be two of his children, probably Aitchy and John Hermann) with the distinctive spires of St Machar's Cathedral behind. The intimate grouping of the two figures, male and female, and the way in which they have left off their work in order to contemplate something else, also recalls Millet's *L'Angélu*s of 1859 (Paris, Musée du Louvre), of which he must certainly have been aware. The sketch was to provide the basis for a figure group in one of Reid's most important landscape paintings, *Montrose* of 1888. (AAG pl. 13).

It is impossible to say whether it was Reid or White who noticed and appreciated the work of George Mason first. For Reid the discovery was an affirmation of the way his own landscape painting was progressing. For White it epitomised all that he valued in the best of modern art. As a rare example he knew of Realism in English art at the time, he deemed it worthy of comment and dissemination. White sent a copy of his article on Mason to Artz,²⁴ thus providing one of several links between Dutch and English schools which were to be facilitated by White over the next few decades.

White visited Artz later that year and in turn Artz travelled to Britain. He saw the Royal Scottish Academy Exhibition and admired Reid's work there. Artz mentioned in one letter how he had been invited to submit a painting or paintings to the Royal Scottish Academy Exhibition but was unable to do so due to pressure of work. In the same letter he comments on how Reid's paintings (either *Haddington* or *Peat Moss, Poolewe*) had been placed in a central position, and given pride of place in a central room.²⁵ Both incidents suggest a change in attitude from only a few years before, when Reid's *Willows by Water Courses* had been received so unsympathetically by the academicians. Towards the end of the year Artz sent printbooks as Christmas presents to the older two White daughters, Alice and Aitchy (Rachel) and a painting to Alexander Macdonald, *Le Bonheur d'Une Mère* (AAG pl. 14). A few months later he sent a very similar one, *Mother's Joy* (AAG pl. 15) to another Aberdonian, Alexander Walker. Letters from this period suggest close and amicable relationships between David Artz, George Reid and John Forbes White, and reveal their shared interests in new styles and artistic developments.

As Reid's skills as a portraitist developed, he was able finally to repay White

²⁴ David Artz to John Forbes White 22 June 1873 (see Appendix A).

²⁵ David Artz to George Reid 28 June 1869.

the money he had borrowed from him over the preceding years. By the end of 1868 Reid had earned £158.11.6 whilst his outgoings had been £172.13.11 - one major expense had been the lodging in The Netherlands which had cost c.£25. All extra expenses were met by White. He lent the money to Reid willingly, in the hope that such an investment would bring a most welcome return in that Reid, his malleable protégé, would transform Scottish art. In the meantime Reid was forced to turn to portraiture but, as with his landscapes, increasingly his inspiration came from the art he had seen in The Netherlands, most particularly from the portraits of Rembrandt. At this date White admired Rembrandt more than any other artist, writing to Reid on one occasion;

How we marvelled in Rembrandt and studied the dates of his pictures and marked the pictures - three very distinct periods - in Antwerp The Night Watch - and The Syndicates - what a growth of life! Mastery becoming more marked at every step.²⁶

This admiration he came to share with Reid, whose work began to show a marked debt to the master, nowhere more clearly than in his portraits of the period.

2.4 George Reid's Portraits

Reid's portraits, ever simpler, less cluttered, more imposing, pointed to the influence of the artists whom White championed - Rembrandt and Velasquez.²⁷ In his debt to Velasquez, Reid was like his contemporary portrait painters in France including, of course, Edouard Manet. Soon the same could be said of him as of Manet that;

This reckless man whom we have mocked is in fact quite prudent in the methods he uses....In a word, if I were asked what new tongue Edouard Manet speaks I should reply: he speaks the language of simplicity and accuracy.²⁸

Reid's portraits too were becoming larger, simpler and his ability to capture the character of his sitter more successful. Fritz Novotny²⁹ comments upon the element of compassion in Israel's work which had a close affinity with the art of Rembrandt. It

²⁶ John Forbes White to George Reid 8 October 1873.

²⁷ John Forbes White wrote the entries on both Rembrandt and Velasquez for the Encyclopaedia Britannica.

²⁸ Émile Zola "Une Nouvelle manière en peinture" Revue du XIX Siècle 1 January 1867.

²⁹ Fritz Novotny Painting and Sculpture in Europe 1780-1880 Pelican History of Art 1960 p 269.

was this quality which affected George Reid so strongly and which transformed his portraits, in a very short time, from adequate renditions of the sitter to intensely penetrating and moving investigations into the psyche of his subject. This dramatic change becomes clear when comparing an early portrait, such as that of William Duguid of 1868 (AAG pl. 16) with a slightly later one - that of George Washington Wilson of 1879 (AAG pl. 17). In the Duguid portrait the sitter is portrayed in a confident and leisurely pose which indicates his station in life and the fact that he owned land (in his case the estate of Auchlunies on Deeside). In typical Victorian fashion, a hunting dog rests its head on his knee, gazing devotedly at his master. The land behind him is relatively flat and uninteresting rather than dramatic but the foreground detail to the right recalls Reid's earliest paintings which were heavily indebted to the Pre-Raphaelite love of naturalistic detail and botanical accuracy.

In the Wilson portrait, only the upper third of the sitter's body is visible. This has the effect of pushing his face - and direct stare - both physically and metaphorically out at the onlooker. Wilson is portrayed, literally "warts and all", the solid features of his face highlighted by a strong light which, in its intensity, leaves the background in darkness. No indication is given of his profession as a photographer, nor any attempt made to place him in a social stratum. Reid has caught the very essence of the man with the most remarkable skill. In the minuscule indication of Wilson's vague sense of disquiet - revealed only by a slight furrow in the brow over his left eye - the artist's compassion for and intimate understanding of his sitter is revealed.

2.5 Alexander Macdonald's Early Collecting

Alexander Macdonald had come to accept and acquire the art of Mollinger, Artz and their Scottish disciples but always chose only the least challenging of their paintings. At the same time he remained committed to established British artists. Macdonald bought two paintings by George Frederick Watts. *Orpheus and Eurydice* was one of the first versions of a subject Watts painted many times. Nearly ten years later Macdonald bought from Watts *Eve Tempted* - a version of the subject which Watts had first tackled in 1869.³⁰ Such acquisitions incensed Reid, who found frequent

³⁰ I am indebted to Richard Jeffries, curator of the Watts Gallery, Compton, Guilford for his assistance in identifying the chronology of these subjects.

occasion to be scathing of Macdonald's taste. Perhaps partly under the influence of John Ruskin, who had written that "all classicality, all middle-aged patent reviving, is utterly vain and absurd"³¹ Reid disliked intensely the deliberate antiquarianism of Watts' work and felt that he should look to nature for inspiration rather than to antiquity;

The fountain head of Watts' inspiration is not nature - but old pictures - now this seems to me an abuse - not the use of knowledge that can be had from the old masters - not the sort of art that will live - that can be genuine can be built upon such a foundation.

In either of the two pictures I refer to - do you find a touch of pure healthy nature? I think not - they are simply clever, morbid anxious reproductions of the ideas of older painters - painted in colours that represent the faded state of their colour after the lapse of centuries and under sundry coatings of brown varnish - Watts' painting is not healthy - it is a sort of antiquarianism - and the results of this should his pictures be in existence in a couple of centuries hence will be seen - He paints his pictures and gives them the dinginess of an old master work - at once - he should have left that to time - but he has chosen to take Times work into his own hands - well - Time will be up sides with him by and by.³²

Under White's tutelage Reid had come to worship classical art. He saw Watts' work as a slavish copying from the classical original and believed that Watts failed completely to use classical art as Reid himself did - as a starting point upon which a new art could be based.

Another favourite artist friend of Macdonald's was James Clarke Hook RA (1819-1907), who had been exhibiting at the Royal Academy exhibitions since 1839. Hook specialised in seascapes and coastal scenes and was himself a keen sailor. In 1866 he had sailed with his family to Gardenstown and Banff on the Moray coast, and had exhibited works based on what he had seen there at the Royal Academy of 1867. Macdonald had admired these paintings and began a correspondence with Hook, recommending Shetland to him, and supplying him with letters of introduction. Hook took Macdonald's advice, and also visited him when he was next in Scotland. This led to Macdonald commissioning a small replica of *Sea Earnings* (RA 1870) which Hook painted during the summer of 1870.³³

³¹ John Ruskin Modern Painters Vol. I – Of General Principles and of Truth Part I Of General Principles 1843.

³² George Reid to John Forbes White 7 August 1870 (see Appendix A).

³³ Allan James Hook Life of James Clarke Hook R.A. London 1919 pp 186-90.

Over the next few years Macdonald acquired a total of seven paintings by J.C. Hook, three by Hook's son Allan and two by the second son Bryan.³⁴ As with the work of Watts, several of the paintings appear to have been commissioned, smaller versions of larger works that Macdonald had seen exhibited at the Royal Academy.

When he visited Aberdeen J.C. Hook and his two sons must have become familiarised with examples of the work of Hague School artists. In 1874 he visited Antwerp, The Hague and Scheveningen, calling on Jozef Israels for whom he had a letter of introduction.³⁵ Allan Hook does not state from whom the letter of recommendation came, but it is very likely to have come from Macdonald, White or Reid. This is reinforced by the fact that immediately on his return from The Netherlands Hook visited Kepplestone again, perhaps to report on his visit. Hook had painted in The Netherlands before, but the introduction to Israels allowed this English academician to come into direct contact with Israels and other Hague School artists. Whilst the grief and portentous sense of tragedy of Israels' paintings never entered his work, Hook's paintings do, nevertheless, come to show an increasing simplicity, a less anecdotal quality and the same reduction in the colour range and increasing emphasis on tonality as can be seen in much Scottish painting over the ensuing years. In England Whistler's influence had been enormous, his *Thames Set* of 1859 introducing graphic realism and a new sense of spatial openness. However Hook's contact with Scottish and Dutch artists and connoisseurs seems a more likely avenue for his own moderate stylistic changes than his knowledge of Whistler's art.

2.6 Jozef Israels visits Scotland

As has been seen, the contact between Dutch and Scottish artists had not ended with Mollinger's death. Indeed by 1870 White had even managed to persuade the acknowledged master of The Hague School, Jozef Israels, to visit Aberdeen. On the 1st June 1870 Jozef Israels, accompanied by his wife, Aleida Schaap, arrived at Seaton Cottage. During the visit Israels painted a portrait of the mother of John Forbes White, Rachel Topp (Mitsui Bank, Tokyo). On 3rd June Reid began to paint a three-quarter length portrait of Israels, but before long the painting had become a collaborative

³⁴ The Hook children were named alphabetically.

³⁵ Hook *op. cit.* p 205.

effort. Reid made quick work of the portrait, the final sitting being on the 6th June. George Paul Chalmers, who had arrived on the 4th at Reid's request, worked on the face, using his friend's palette and brushes. They asked Israels himself to paint the background and, just as the painting was nearing completion, Hugh Cameron walked in and added a few touches. Mia Reid relates how Israels brought the project to completion;

At the last sitting Israels seized the brush exclaiming, "Now I will show you what Rembrandt would do", and added some masterly strokes.³⁶

On the brown sleeve of Israels' coat was inscribed in red letters: "*A notre ami White*," and the signatures of the four artists.³⁷ This portrait (AAG pl. 18), painted by Reid, Chalmers, Cameron and Israels and dedicated to White, can be seen as the physical embodiment of this crucial visit and is illustrative of the close ties of friendship and artistic taste which these men shared. Epitomised by the dedication is White's pivotal role in the movement and the vital part he played as instigator and host of this convivial artistic meeting which all the Scottish artists present must have perceived as a very significant moment in their lives.

After the Israels portrait was completed the men dined together at Seaton Cottage. Conversation turned to classical art - perhaps as White showed Israels his collection of Tanagra figures. The views of Israels and White on the subject were as one, for as Israels wrote to White some years later;

Most people believe it is strange that Greek art is only all idealesque. They do not understand that they are based on the same ground as all the art - *c'est a dire*, on Nature.³⁸

White and Israels shared many interests, including an admiration for Goethe,³⁹ and in the years to come their correspondence would often turn to subjects other than art. It is clear that the relationship was not one merely of artist and patron, but of friends.

The following day White escorted his visitors through the most scenic parts of Scotland - along Deeside and up to The Spital of Glenshee, where Israels made a

³⁶ Journal of Mia Reid Volume III p 36.

³⁷ Israels was to inscribe another study of himself in a similar way for James Staats Forbes twelve years later. See Dekkers *Jozef Israels 1824-1911* Groningen 1999 p 342.

³⁸ Jozef Israels to John Forbes White 30 March 1886.

³⁹ Heinrich Heine and Goethe were Israels' favourite authors. He particularly admired Goethe's translation of Benvenuto Cellini's autobiography. Israels was to visit the Goethe Museum in Weimar in 1888. See Dekkers *op. cit.* p 35.

sketch of a Highland funeral.⁴⁰ It was at this time that White commissioned from Israels *The Anxious Family*.⁴¹ This work is untraced but from its title it may be assumed that it dealt with Israels' favoured subject of a family either awaiting the return from sea of a loved one or gathered around the sick bed. In both kinds of painting the grief is tangible and a bad outcome is suggested by the mood and treatment of the painting.

Alexander Macdonald too had asked Israels for a painting, but whilst White was completely comfortable with Israels' most tragic work, Macdonald was not. His painting, *The Errand* (AAG pl. 19), a scene of three children on a beach, has none of Israels' more poignant elements but relies instead on anecdote, sentimentality and sweetness for effect.⁴² The difference between the two paintings is made clear by Artz, who visited Israels when he was painting both pictures;

Israels just finished two pictures for Aberdeen, I think Mr White's is a very fine one, perhaps the other too (for Mr Macdonald), but I don't consider it so lucky, it is of course not necessary to tell him so.⁴³

Macdonald already owned a painting by Israels that he had bought at the Paris Salon in 1868.⁴⁴ This work, *The Sleepers* (AAG pl. 20) is another sweet, sentimental image, which lacks entirely the poignancy of Israels' best work.

2.7 George Paul Chalmers and Hugh Cameron

Although born in Montrose (in 1833) George Paul Chalmers' connections with Aberdeen go back to at least 1864 when he had painted a haunting portrait of George Reid, which had been hung in the window of an Aberdeen art dealer and had drawn widespread attention, being admired by James Cassie and John Phillip⁴⁵. This is probably the portrait in Aberdeen Art Gallery (pl. 21). Perhaps on the strength of this painting Chalmers had obtained a commission to paint a Breton interior for Alexander

⁴⁰ Ina Mary Harrower "Jozef Israels and his Aberdeen Friend" *Aberdeen University Review* 1927 p37.

⁴¹ This work may have been that exhibited at The Royal Academy, the first year Israels' work was accepted there, in 1871(665).

⁴² Dekkers points out, however, how the poet and publicist Vosmaer had been inspired by a similar painting by Israels to compose a poem which focussed on the way such apparently sweet images could portend tragedy. *op. cit.* p 26.

⁴³ David Artz to George Reid 4 July 1871 (see Appendix A).

⁴⁴ David Artz to George Reid 8 July 1868 (see Appendix A).

⁴⁵ Edward Pinnington *George Paul Chalmers and the Art of His Time* Glasgow 1906 pp 123-4.

Walker (see Appendix A, 1864 & 1865). It is significant that Chalmers and Hugh Cameron (1835-1918) spent time with Israels in 1870, for they were to be particularly affected by his art. Whilst Reid's portraits show an obvious debt to Israels, he rarely painted interiors or imagined family groups.⁴⁶ Both G.P. Chalmers and Hugh Cameron, however, often painted such scenes. In doing so they were following in the Scottish tradition, established by David Wilkie, but their contact with Israels was to have a significant effect on the way that they painted such subjects. There is clearly evident in Chalmers' work of the early 1870s a move away from Wilkiesque interiors towards a more atmospheric, brooding and gloomy depiction of peasant life. Whilst the narrative element is still important chiaroscuro, tone and mood are given more prominence than before. This change is epitomised by his best known work, *The Legend* (National Gallery of Scotland). Started in 1864, *The Legend* was worked on by Chalmers intermittently throughout his life. Whether based on a scene from Walter Scott's *Pirate*, as is stated by Errington⁴⁷ or on Robert Fergusson's poem, *The Farmer's Ingle* as Macmillan has suggested,⁴⁸ Chalmers early on began to alter the composition and mood of the work. It was, however, almost certainly after his first contact with Jozef Israels⁴⁹ that he decided to make the painting more dramatic, by adding a second light source to the left, yet reducing the overall lightness of the scene and also by omitting various still life objects which appear in a study for the work (AAG pl. 22), thus bringing it very close - in composition, lighting and mood - to paintings such as *From Darkness to Light/ The Funeral* of 1871 (Tel Aviv Museum of Art), which Israels had exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1871 and had sold, probably soon after, to James Staats Forbes.⁵⁰ Errington,⁵¹ whilst accepting the influence of Israels on the lighting of the painting, refutes the idea that he could have influenced the subject of the work, in that Israels' concern is for the "austerity and grimness of peasant life". As has been seen Israels was equally capable of looking at the pleasanter side of peasant life. Whilst Chalmers' knowledge of Wilkie's work might have inspired his choice of subject and

⁴⁶ *Net Mending* (untraced) painted, significantly in 1871, may be a notable exception.

⁴⁷ Lindsay Errington *Master Class: Robert Scott Lauder and his Pupils* Edinburgh 1983 p 83.

⁴⁸ In conversation with the author.

⁴⁹ John Forbes White confirms that Chalmers worked on the head of the old woman after his return from visiting Israels in The Netherlands. See John Forbes White & Alexander Gibson *G. Paul Chalmers* Edinburgh 1879 p 50.

⁵⁰ See Dekkers *Jozef Israels 1824-1911* Groningen 1999 pp178-9.

⁵¹ Lindsay Errington *op. cit.* p 84.

also the composition – Wilkie’s use of empty space had influenced many artists in Chalmers’ circle, most notably W.Q. Orchardson. Israels may well have contributed to the transformation of this important painting from a simple genre scene, an artistic interpretation of Scott’s (or Fergusson’s) story – into a truly Realist work, in which present day peasant life is, in spite of the children’s evident enthrallment, observed as simple, sombre and somewhat bleak.

Around the time of Israels’ visit Chalmers was working on the first of two child portraits *Sympathy*, of 1871 (AAG) and a portrait of White’s daughter Rachel *Aitchie* of 1874 (AAG pl. 23).⁵² In these most sombre of portraits Chalmers treats his sitters in a most tender way. The youthful features of both children are depicted with great sensitivity yet without any cloying sentimentality. The gloom from which the child in *Sympathy* appears is so dark that her clothes are not identifiable. In *Aitchie* Rachel wears what appears to be fancy dress⁵³ – a Rembrandtesque costume of black wool with white lace ruff. Rachel’s frizzy hair, pulled severely off the face, is treated in a manner which reminded another of White’s daughters of Rembrandt’s *Absolom* (Hermitage)⁵⁴. The sombre mood of the child also recalls Velasquez’s half-length portrait of *The Infanta Margerita* when aged four or five (Louvre) of which, apparently, Chalmers “never spoke but with wonder and despair”.⁵⁵ The inspiration and treatment for such paintings came ultimately from White’s favourite artists, Rembrandt and Velasquez. Some time after his return to The Netherlands Israels’ portraits too changed dramatically, the thin glazes, light backgrounds, overall colour, clarity and smiling faces of works such as *Vogelina Pinto* of 1846 (Private Collection) or *Professor Joël Emmanuel Goudsmidt* of 1866 (Leiden University) replaced by the solemnity, dark tones, thick impasto and overall vigour of *Sarah Bernhardt* of 1886-90 (Groningen, Groninger Museum) or *Willem Roelofs* of 1892 (The Hague, Hague Historical Museum). There are very clear similarities between the portraits of children by George Reid and George Paul Chalmers and those of Jozef Israels, his *Sara Henriette Cohen* of 1888 (Private Collection), for example, sharing with Chalmers’

⁵² Pinnington mistakenly identifies Aitchie as a son of White rather than his daughter, Rachel. See Edward Pinnington *George Paul Chalmers and the art of his Time* 1906 p 182.

⁵³ The White girls did dress up – one photograph (pl. 24) shows Ina Mary in traditional Dutch costume.

⁵⁴ Fyfe & Minto *John Forbes White, Miller, Collector, Photographer 1831-1904* Edinburgh 1970 p14.

⁵⁵ See John Forbes White & Alexander Gibson *G. Paul Chalmers* Edinburgh 1879 p 52.

depiction of Aitchie, or Reid's portrait of Esther Emily Ailing (Aberdeen Art Gallery) a similar format, lighting and mood.⁵⁶ All the artists in this circle were assimilating their knowledge of Rembrandt and Velasquez, but it is fascinating to speculate as to whether the changes evident in Israels' portraits at this time might have been prompted by his knowledge of the paintings of his Scottish friends or by his lengthy discussions with their patron, John Forbes White.⁵⁷

It is also interesting to note that five years before John Everett Millais had also painted a child in the manner of Velasquez - and even titled the work *A Souvenir of Velasquez* (Royal Academy, Diploma Collection), but Chalmers' work has none of the decorative qualities of Millais' painting; his is instead an entirely honest and unsentimentalised depiction of a young girl.

White's group of artists found a ready market for their work in Aberdeen. In 1872 Cameron exhibited *The Village Well* at the Royal Academy. Alexander Macdonald bought it from the show. The following year Cameron's *Going to the Well* and his portrait of John Hermann, John Forbes White's son, were exhibited at the Royal Scottish Academy when both paintings were owned by White. Cameron had evidently been introduced to Cottier, and had painted Mrs Cottier, a work which was exhibited at the Royal Scottish Academy exhibition of 1874.

2.8 The Mackintosh Portrait

As with Chalmers' portraits at this date the debt to Rembrandt in Reid's portraits is clear, yet he remained open to other influences. As was the case with almost all of his contemporaries, the influence of John Everett Millais cannot be overemphasised. Reid's abilities as a portraitist were improving steadily and were bringing him a degree of success. He had not been able to accompany his friends on their historic tour with Israels up Glenshee, but had to leave for London the morning

⁵⁶ Israels' critics in The Netherlands were as damning of his new loose, tonal style as were the Scottish critics of Reid and Chalmers. See Dekkers *Jozef Israels 1824-1911* Groningen 1999 p 94.

⁵⁷ Many of Israels' paintings suggest a knowledge of British art. His *Silent Dialogue / Old Friends* of 1882 (Philadelphia Museum of Art), for example could work very well as a "before" to the "after" of Landseer's famous *The Old Shepherd's Chief Mourner* (London, Victoria & Albert Museum). The Landseer had been exhibited at the International of 1865 and was reproduced several times.

after the dinner, as he had a commission to paint the two daughters of the industrialist, Alexander Mackintosh.⁵⁸

Reid decided to paint Mackintosh's daughters Dorothy and Lucy, who were aged eight and six, together on one canvas. The painting is untraced but Reid described his proposed composition to White,⁵⁹ accompanying his letter with a small sketch of his proposed design (pl. 25). This sketch reveals a composition which bears a remarkable resemblance to a painting by John Everett Millais, *Leisure Hours* (Detroit Institute of Arts pl. 26) which Reid had seen and commented upon - at the Royal Academy six years earlier. Millais' work was constantly in Reid's mind. Indeed in the subsequent lines of his letter he discusses Millais' recent portrait of the Marchioness of Aboyne, comparing it unfavourably with Millais' earlier work.⁶⁰

The poses of the two sets of girls is virtually identical, except that they are reversed, as is their positioning on the canvas and their relationship to the background. In the Mackintosh portrait Reid replaced the goldfish bowl with a pond, but in so doing would have lost little of the overt symbolism which suggests at the trapped and circumscribed lives of Victorian maidens.

Like John Pender, the father of the two girls in *Leisure Hours*, Mackintosh was a businessman involved in textiles. It is not impossible that Mackintosh knew Pender and also was familiar with the Millais portrait, but the likelihood is that the similarity of the two paintings came about through Reid's lifelong admiration for Millais which, though rarely expressed, was a constant presence in his work.

2.9 William Leiper

Mackintosh came from Perthshire and, when Reid was painting for him, he was having a house built in Auchterarder, Colearn House. For this work he had selected the Glasgow architect William Leiper (1839-1916). Reid was invited to stay there in order to complete portraits of Mr Mackintosh and his mother.⁶¹ It may have been at this time that he met Leiper, with whom he managed to secure an apprenticeship for his younger

⁵⁸ Journal of Mia Reid Volume III pp 31-2.

⁵⁹ George Reid to John Forbes White July 1870 (see Appendix A).

⁶⁰ George Reid to John Forbes White July 1870 (see Appendix A).

⁶¹ Journal Mia Reid Vol. III p 38 notes that Reid was paid £270 for three pictures – a portrait of Mackintosh himself, one of Mackintosh's mother and the double portrait of the two girls.

brother Sam who was fifteen or sixteen at the time.⁶² Daniel Cottier, who had already collaborated with Leiper at Dowanhill Church, had been commissioned by Mackintosh to provide furniture and all the interior decoration for Colearn House, including a great deal of stained glass.⁶³ It was in all probability Cottier who introduced Reid to Leiper. Soon Leiper and Reid were also working in tandem - Leiper designing frames for Reid, including one for a portrait of a Mr Gavin of Elchies, Auchterarder in 1870.⁶⁴ Leiper was also asked to create furniture designs for Reid's home. Architect and artist collaborated on the work - Leiper designing the furniture and Reid the family monograms which his sisters Agnes and Lizzie then embroidered onto chair backs.⁶⁵ In 1878, when George Reid took possession of a small cottage across the road from Alexander Macdonald's house at Kepplestone on the western outskirts of Aberdeen, he employed Leiper to extend the house, adding larger reception rooms, just as Cottier had done for White at Seaton Cottage ten years earlier.

2.10 John Everett Millais

To decorate the walls of his newly extended house Macdonald continued to buy the work of the Royal Academicians. In 1870 he was evidently contemplating acquiring a painting by John Everett Millais and had made this fact known to George Reid. Whilst Reid's paintings reveal a life-long admiration for the work of Millais, he nevertheless did not approve of the very high prices that Millais could command for his work, comparing this with his hero Rembrandt, who had died bankrupt. Reid was particularly severe on Millais' wife Effie Gray, blaming her for what he saw as the inflated prices of Millais' paintings;

I hope Macdonald will have better thoughts and not go in for a Millais - he will be foolish if he does - He will pay quite a ransom for anything he may get - and the satisfaction of knowing he will never make his own out of it again. Millais has been too worked up by the dealers - and has too extravagant a wife to act the G.F. Watts.⁶⁶

⁶² George Reid to John Forbes White 25 November 1870 (see Appendix A).

⁶³ See Michael Donnelly *Glasgow Stained Glass* Glasgow 1981 p 11.

⁶⁴ The frame was made up by Hay & Lyall in the Gallowgate, Aberdeen. George Reid to John Forbes White 21 August 1870.

⁶⁵ George Reid to John Forbes White 14 January 1871 (see Appendix A).

⁶⁶ George Reid to John Forbes White 11 May 1870. Millais' paintings were indeed achieving record prices, see Gerard Reitlinger *The Economics of Taste* London 1961 pp 152-3.

On his frequent visits to London Reid stayed with the Huntly-born novelist, poet and preacher George Macdonald (1824-1905)⁶⁷ whom he had almost certainly met through White (White's brother-in-law William Geddes had been at University with Macdonald). George Macdonald was John Ruskin's closest friend and confidant. He had no reason to doubt Ruskin's protestations that Effie Gray had created trumped up charges (of non-consummation) in order to release herself from their marriage.⁶⁸ Macdonald and his wife Louisa acted as go-betweens in Ruskin's attempts to marry the daughter of a mutual friend, Rose La Touche and, although the marriage came to nothing, Ruskin's evident passion for Rose and his determination to marry her, enforced his argument that he had indeed been wronged. Knowing this coterie well, yet knowing Millais at this stage only through his work.⁶⁹ Reid quite understandably sided with the Ruskin camp and, like many others, never came to accept Effie Grey into his society.⁷⁰

Millais exhibited regularly at the Royal Scottish Academy from 1852. After his marriage to Effie (who was a Scot) in 1855, Millais spent lengthy periods at Annet Lodge, near the home of Effie's parents, Bowerswell, in Perthshire. From 1862 their main base was in London but extended holidays were spent in different houses in the Perthshire countryside. Consequently Millais came to have far closer contacts with the Scottish School than through a passing acquaintance with the Scottish art exhibited in London. He would have seen the paintings of Mollinger and Roelofs exhibited at the Royal Scottish Academy and also those held in private collections in the home of his friends and acquaintances. This extended exposure to the work of The Hague School artists and their Scottish admirers meant that he was far more amenable to Dutch art than were his English contemporaries on many of whom the hold of the colourful,

⁶⁷ George Macdonald, his wife and eleven children had moved to "The Retreat" in Hammersmith in 1867. Daniel Cottier was employed to refurbish Macdonald's study which he did, with crimson-flocked wallpaper stencilled over with black fleur-de-lis, and a dark blue ceiling overlaid with silver and gold. (see William Reaper George Macdonald Lion Publishing, Herts 1987 p 235.).

⁶⁸ Reaper *op. cit.* pp 274-5.

⁶⁹ They were later to meet on several occasions and in 1880 Reid painted Millais' portrait for Alexander Macdonald.

⁷⁰ White is known to have corresponded with Ruskin. In 1871 reference is made to a letter from Ruskin to White. White was proud of this letter, circulating it around his friends. Reid passed it on to Joseph Noel Paton, who declared it to be "the finest thing that has ever been said on the subject". George Reid to John Forbes White 13 January 1871.

minutely detailed narrative art of the Pre-Raphaelites and their followers remained overpowering. This must account to a large extent for the major change that took place in Millais' work c.1870. This change is first seen in his landscapes, most notably *Chill October* of 1870 (Private Collection). The painting - a view of the Tay at Kinfauns just below Perth - was Millais' first large-scale Scottish landscape. It demonstrates the same stylistic and subject choices that Reid had been making for several years and has close parallels with the contemporary work of George Paul Chalmers, such as *Head of Loch Lomond* (Dundee, Orchar Collection).

In the same way that Reid never acknowledged his debt to Millais, Millais only ever ascribed the inspiration he drew for this painting to the particular Perthshire landscape with which he was so familiar. He claimed that *Chill October* came about because this was a scene he had wanted to paint for many years, writing "my friends at the time were at a loss to understand what I saw in such a scene".⁷¹ Indeed it was a very bleak scene, bereft of any human interest. The viewpoint is low and a long, horizontal format is employed. In *Chill October*, Millais replaces the cultivated land of the south with a bleaker, northern scene. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood's sunny summer landscapes are replaced by the colouring of autumn, allowing the opportunity for restricted tonal contrasts. Malcolm Warner⁷² likens it in mood to *Autumn Leaves* (Manchester City Art Galleries) and *The Vale of Rest* (Tate Gallery) but they are earlier works and more firmly rooted in The Pre-Raphaelite tradition than *Chill October*. Whilst *Chill October* shares their mood of melancholy, it lacks their obvious symbolism. In its quiet, poetic quality it recalls White's salt prints of similar subjects, some of which Millais owned and kept in his own photograph album. The subdued tonality, horizontal format and low horizon of the painting mark a new departure for Millais and, in both subject and treatment, this work bears much more of a resemblance to the paintings of The Hague School and the work of the Scottish artists - Reid, Chalmers and Cameron - who had been so influenced by contemporary Dutch art. It is doubtful whether Millais' Dutch and Scottish acquaintances would have had the same difficulty in understanding his choice of subject as had, apparently, his English friends.

By 1870 The Hague School artists were becoming very well known in Europe.

⁷¹ Mary Bennet John Everett Millais Exhibition Catalogue, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool 1967 p 50.

⁷² Malcolm Warner The Pre-Raphaelites Tate Gallery catalogue 1984 p 219.

Mesdag's *Breakers in the North Sea* (location unknown), of a similar format and bleak subject as Millais' *Chill October*, won a gold medal at the Paris Salon that year. However in England most established artists seemed to be strangely isolated from modern developments in art. They remained entrenched in the tenets of the Pre-Raphaelite Movement, their own strong cultural traditions isolating them from developments abroad. Although Israels' *Fishermen Carrying a Drowned Man* (National Gallery, London), had been hailed at the International Exhibition in London of 1862 The Royal Academy never exhibited work by either Mollinger or Maris, and by Israels and Mesdag only from 1871.⁷³ It was to be twenty years before artists such as Hubert von Herkomer and Stanhope Forbes were to establish Realism firmly in England.⁷⁴

Millais, through his Scottish experience, was becoming aligned to the modern European School. Indeed in many respects from c.1870 Millais can be far more easily grouped with Scottish artists than with English. Although he acknowledged no debt to either his Dutch or Scottish contemporaries, there was undoubtedly a debt; a debt brought about through his access to Dutch art, which had been provided to a large extent through John Forbes White.

Whatever the source of his inspiration, Millais' position in the English art world facilitated the acceptance of this difficult subject. *Chill October* was highly praised and purchased in 1871 for £1000 and sold again, four years later, for £3255. When it was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1874 it was acclaimed. Reid, however, in spite or perhaps because of the fact that it was so like his own work, evidently disliked Millais' new style, preferring to pigeon-hole him with his more anecdotal work;

His picture of the flood although amazingly popular, is hardly worthy of him, it looks made up to a degree, the finest thing that perhaps he has ever done is the

⁷³ In about 1890 George Reid acquired a small sepia study for Israels' painting from an Edinburgh dealer. Reid had first seen the study in Mollinger's studio in Utrecht in 1865. It had been given to Mollinger by Israels and was inscribed "*a mon ami Mollinger Josef Israels*".

⁷⁴ Neither artist was truly English. Herkomer was Bavarian by birth. He retained close links with Europe, exhibiting at the Paris Salon, where he was awarded the Legion d'Honneur. Stanhope Forbes had a Scottish father, a French mother and was schooled in Belgium. He was a nephew of the London railway magnate James Staats Forbes (1823-1904), who in turn was a friend of Israels and champion of Dutch Art. Staats Forbes' home, which was full of Hague School pictures, was apparently "a second home to the young artist". See Mrs Lionel Birch *Stanhope A. Forbes A.R.A. and Elizabeth Stanhope Forbes A.R.S.W.* London 1889 p 7.

children in the young Raleigh picture - they are wonderfully fine although I quite feel the truth of what Israels says about the work as a whole.⁷⁵

Most Scottish artists travelled south but Millais' continued presence in Scotland and the fact that he exhibited at the Royal Scottish Academy on a regular basis, meant that he was to come to be of particular significance to Scottish artists. Reid's views on *Chill October* were not shared by a younger group of Scottish artists who, much to the disgust of Reid, found the painting inspirational. Reid, though careful never to cite his own debt to Millais, was extremely critical of others whose debt to him became too obvious;

Young Joseph Milne has done a stupid thing. He has gone to "siggy din" the place on the Tay where Millais painted his "Chill October" and sat down in the same spot and painted a large picture of the place - as good in some respects as Millais perhaps - but still so like that it looks like a copy - five others have done the same thing - so that the place is well "chill octobered" this year. One can hardly understand how people can be so stupid.⁷⁶

Reid, whilst in his work exhibiting an ardent admiration for Millais, was to his friends, his vociferous critic and critical too of the younger artists who emulated him. For Reid, however, Millais remained his benchmark on which he could judge his own career. Millais was commercially successful but also respected by his peers (even those who did not admire his subject matter were impressed by his sheer technical skill). This admiration is borne out by Reid's paintings - such as the early church interiors and the Mackintosh portrait. It is seen too when, in February 1878 Reid took over Millais' old studio in Cromwell Place, writing to White excitedly about it;

I have not begun work yet as I have had a lot of bother about getting a place suitable to paint in - I have got it at last, and where do you think? In Millais' old studio in Cromwell Place!⁷⁷

Reid's ambitions to emulate Millais' success were partially realised when, on 9th November 1870 George Paul Chalmers and James Oswald Stewart⁷⁸ came with the news that Reid, who was twenty-nine years old, had been elected an Associate of the

⁷⁵ George Reid to John Forbes White July 1870.

⁷⁶ George Reid to John Forbes White 9 February 1886. Joseph Milne (1857-1911) was the father of J. McLaughlin Milne.

⁷⁷ George Reid to John Forbes White 6 February 1878.

⁷⁸ James Oswald Stewart (fl. 1864-1894) was another disciple of Mollinger School.

Royal Scottish Academy.⁷⁹ Reid immediately telegraphed the news to his mother, to Alexander Walker, the Rev. Thomson in Haddington and to John Forbes White. Alexander Macdonald was not informed immediately - an indication that he was on the edge of this select group of artists and connoisseurs.

Three months later, on 18th February 1871, Reid and White went to London to see the exhibition of Old Masters in the Royal Academy. There Reid came across Yvon, the painter of historical pieces with whom he had studied in Paris. Along with so many other French men Yvon had fled from Paris which was then under siege. The change in their fortunes shocked Reid. He found his former master like a fish out of water, unable to speak English, “a stranger in a strange land”.⁸⁰ London was a haven for many French artists, including Monet, Sisley, Fantin Latour and Diaz de la Peña, yet they remained strangely isolated and their effect on English art was to come indirectly and some time later through other channels.

2.11 George Reid visits Israels

On 1st September 1871 Reid left once again for The Hague, where he stayed with the Israels family. Reid used a studio at the bottom of the garden adjoining that of Israels. He spent time in Scheveningen too, where he found time to relax by bathing and sitting on the beach. He and Israels worked closely together, sketching sand barges on the Scheveningen canal, which ran past the end of Israels’ garden. This was a rare and pleasant break from the necessity of making a living. His letters to White suggest that he was enjoying the break from his relentless portrait commissions.

Israels gave Macdonald a sketch (probably in watercolours) entitled *Farewell* (untraced) which depicted a woman holding a baby and looking out to sea.⁸¹ It may also have been at this point that he also gave Reid a watercolour entitled *The Sick Mother*⁸² (Aberdeen Art Gallery), which he inscribed “With my highest regards to George Reid”. Although Reid had trained initially as a line artist, under Israels’ tutelage his watercolours came to resemble those of his Dutch friend. Rough, wet

⁷⁹ Reid’s name was put forward by George Paul Chalmers. See Edward Pinnington George Paul Chalmers & The Art of his Time Glasgow 1896 p 137.

⁸⁰ Journal of Mia Reid Volume III p 49.

⁸¹ Reaper *op. cit.* p 271.

⁸² This sketch is a study for *The Convalescence/The Sick Mother* (Jerusalem, The Israels Museum). See Dekkers Jozef Israels 1824-1911 Groningen 1999 p 294.

strokes, splashes of colour, of equal tone and broad, loose brushwork replacing the more meticulous watercolours of his youth.

Whilst at The Hague Reid spent time with David Artz, Jacob Maris, Anton Mauve, Hendrik Mesdag, Christophel Bisschop, Willem Nakken and several other artists. He also met Alma Tadema and his new wife. In September George Macdonald arrived at The Hague. Reid took Macdonald, his wife, daughter Lilia and friend Mr Matheson about the sights and also introduced them to Jozef Israels. Thus George Macdonald - whose own close circle included Ruskin, the Burne-Joneses and Arthur Hughes - had the opportunity to come into direct contact with contemporary Dutch art. On 31st October Reid spent his 30th birthday at The Hague, leaving a few days later, on 2nd November 1871. Altogether he had spent two months working with Israels and meeting other Dutch artists.

2.12 Daniel Cottier and Public Commissions for Aberdeen

On 3rd July 1871 two windows by Daniel Cottier were unveiled in St Machar's Cathedral in Old Aberdeen. The larger one, with figures of Saints Paul and John the Baptist, was paid for by White in memory of his older brother Adam who had died when a missionary in India. The smaller window had been funded by Reid in memory of his two older brothers; James, an engineer in the P & O who died in Southampton, and John, who had drowned many years before. Reid took great efforts in researching the best style for these windows, even consulting John Ruskin on the subject.⁸³ A year or two later a third window was installed. Also by Cottier this was *The Painters Window*, commemorating three famous Aberdeen artists; George Jamesone, William Dyce and John Phillip (pl. 27). Below the portrait heads of the three artists are figures representing Faith, Hope and Charity. The idea for this window came from discussions between Reid and White and was assisted to completion through the intervention of Mr Alexander, Dean of Guild and Alexander Macdonald. These four alone sent out circulars to raise subscriptions for the £200 required to fund the project. The work was completed in just a few weeks. The text, which would be incorporated into the design of each panel and which would describe each artist's work, was debated and amended and finally translated into Latin by William Geddes. Although Reid was very critical of

⁸³ John Ruskin to George Reid 6 January 1869.

William Dyce, he could see that such a window - to Jamesone, Dyce and Phillip - could establish an artistic heritage for Aberdeen and thus confirm the city's standing as an artistic and cultural centre.

Throughout his lengthy stay in The Netherlands, Reid had corresponded frequently with White. One topic of great concern was the subject of St Nicholas Kirk - the mither kirk of New Aberdeen. The East Church of St Nicholas, where Cottier glass had been installed the previous year, had recently burned down. Discussion turned to the West Church of St Nicholas, which had been designed by James Gibbs in the previous century.⁸⁴ On 20th October a meeting was held to decide on what improvements should be made to the church. Reid opposed change in terms of removing anything old. Reid's argument was fixed on the idea that the interior of the church should not be altered because it was integral to the design as a whole, that is that the heavy galleries - which in fact deny any sense of a view within the interior - were the idea of Gibbs and, therefore, sacrosanct. Reid even argued that the interior space could be further utilised with the addition of yet more pews. He advocated instead improvement only with the addition of colour.⁸⁵ This colour should come in the form of stained glass and should be executed by "the most competent decorator". The decorator Reid had in mind, as can be seen from his letters of the time to John Forbes White, was none other than Daniel Cottier.

Reid's views were roundly condemned by others, one of his critics, a Mr Walker, describing Cottier as "only a glass stainer" a view which incensed Reid.⁸⁶ His reply, which was published in the local newspaper, was both scathing and damning. In it he described Gibbs as a man of refined and cultivated tastes who (importantly for Reid) had studied much abroad. Reid stressed that the public should not be accepted as competent judges - an attitude which no doubt served to alienate him from them. Reid saw himself as the arbiter of taste, the expert on matters cultural and artistic.

⁸⁴ James Gibbs was born in Aberdeen in 1682. He studied in Italy and his Book of Architecture helped to spread the Palladian style throughout the New World. A friend and disciple of Sir Christopher Wren, in 1713 Gibbs became one of the commissioners for building new churches in London. He was dismissed two years later, however, because of his Roman Catholicism. He went on to design St Mary-le-Strand (1717), the steeple of St Clement's Danes (1719), St Peter's, Veere Street (1724) and, perhaps his finest church, St Martin-in-the-Fields (1726). Gibbs also designed St Bartholemew's Hospital (1730) the Radcliffe Camera at Oxford (1737-47) and the Senate House at Cambridge (1730). He died in 1754.

⁸⁵ George Reid to John Forbes White 21 October 1874 (see Appendix A).

⁸⁶ George Reid to John Forbes White 30 September 1871 (see Appendix A).

In his attempts to retain the original interior of the Cathedral, Reid was acting as a modern-day conservationist. He is known to have objected to the destruction of George Jamesone's 16th century house on Schoolhill and throughout his life he attempted to combine sympathetically the old and the new in Aberdeen.⁸⁷ His aim was always to attempt to achieve the most tasteful and appropriate solution to any artistic project - and by artistic he meant that word in the broadest possible terms. In spite, or perhaps because of, Reid's forthright and damning letters to the local Press, Daniel Cottier was called upon to work on the West Church. As Reid had desired Cottier produced glass for the windows. This glass, predominantly yellow with touches of red, was simple and allowed a great deal of light to enter the inside of the church. The motifs - geometric patterns and simple flowers and leaves - were very similar to those which Cottier had used in Mackintosh's house at Auchterarder four years earlier. Cottier also designed ceiling decorations. These decorations repeated the simple and dainty motifs of the glass. Predominantly blue, their stars, flowers and geometric designs (designs that Cottier had seen and admired in churches abroad)⁸⁸ served to lighten the otherwise very sombre interior (pl. 28).⁸⁹ Cottier continued to work in and around Aberdeen, producing glass for Balgownie Lodge, one of the homes of the Crombie Family, and at Crathie Church on Deeside.⁹⁰

2.13 George Reid in Edinburgh

In the early 1870s Reid took lodgings in Edinburgh at 23 Duke Street. His close friendship with Chalmers occupied much of his day. Reid would collect him every morning for a walk and, for a time, a change was evident in Chalmers' lifestyle;⁹¹ he was rising early and working hard.⁹² However often the walks were blighted by Chalmers' dark moods. Reid was becoming very aware that Chalmers' work was

⁸⁷ In 1883 Reid made a study of the house, in pen and inks, and also a portrait of Jamesone, based on his self portrait in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery (PG 2361) both of which were subsequently engraved for J.B. Bulloch's monograph on Jamesone of 1885.

⁸⁸ Daniel Cottier to William Smith, City Architect, 14 March 1875. Local Studies Department, Aberdeen Central Library.

⁸⁹ Though vandalised in places, much of the glass remains. The ceiling decorations were overpainted with whitewash in the 1950s.

⁹⁰ Journal of Mia Reid Vol. III p 75.

⁹¹ Pinnington described Chalmers' disposition as the opposite of placid and wrote that he was "swept by storms". See Pinnington *George Paul Chalmers and the Art of his Time* Glasgow 1896 p 82.

⁹² George Reid to John Forbes White 27 December 1871 (see Appendix A).

suffering from his depression and he tried to prevent him from overworking his paintings.⁹³ Much of Reid's efforts were in vain, however, and Chalmers remained a constant worry to his devoted friends.

Reid's own career was now taking off, but the large proportion of his output was portraits. Reid longed to be able to paint more landscapes and, as early as 1870 he vowed to give up portraiture except in the most exceptional of circumstances.⁹⁴ Reid never achieved this aim. Like Millais, supporting his extended family meant making a big income.⁹⁵ Reid was following his chosen career but was as trapped by the necessity of painting portraits as White was by running the milling business and he is remembered today principally for the numerous portraits that he produced. White showed as much interest in Reid's portraits as in his other work and often gave him specific, artistic advice;

I got the little sketch for Dr Keith's portrait this morning - all right - I shall work over it and give it a little more of the look of the picture - you are quite right about the tone of the shadows.⁹⁶

Although Reid was now resident in Edinburgh, White's influence remained strong and he continued to have an important say in how Reid's work turned out.

2.14 Archibald David Reid

Whilst his own career was taking off Reid remained ever mindful of the faltering career of his younger brother Archy. Whilst in The Netherlands in 1871, he had urged White to take over his role as Archy's guardian, teacher and promoter. Clearly White took great trouble to fill this role, visiting Archy regularly and commenting on his work.⁹⁷ White's impact on Archy's work was marked; White clearly felt that the contact was benefiting his new protégé;

I am glad to hear Archy's pictures are getting on well - see him often and give him the benefit of your council.⁹⁸

⁹³ George Reid to John Forbes White 21 January 1871 (see Appendix A).

⁹⁴ George Reid to John Forbes White 21 August 1870 (see Appendix A).

⁹⁵ George Reid to John Forbes White 7 August 1870 (see Appendix A).

⁹⁶ George Reid to John Forbes White 21 January 1871 (see Appendix A).

⁹⁷ George Reid to John Forbes White 14 January 1871 (see Appendix A).

⁹⁸ George Reid to John Forbes White 27 December 1871 (see Appendix A).

Reid even encouraged White's physical intervention in Archy's work; "give a look now and then to what Archy is doing," he wrote to his patron, "and paint on his pictures when you feel needful".⁹⁹ Reid also hoped that White might be able to facilitate the sale of Archy's most recent painting;

I am glad you like Archy's picture so well - it would be very nice if he sent it as "property of" but do not I pray you do anything that would make you seem to urge Mr Crombie - if he likes it good and weel - but knowing your good nature I would say do not say too much.¹⁰⁰

Archy had two paintings accepted at the Royal Scottish Academy that year, one of which, *Under the Beech Trees* (untraced), was lent by Mr J Crombie.

As he had with George, White set out to define Archy's art, to improve his technique, to alter his subject matter and finally to recommend his work to others. The effect on Archy of contact with the philosophies of White was, if anything, more cataclysmic than it had been for George Reid. Archy could, when required, turn out works of an earlier style, in the manner of James Cassie; scenes of the fishing villages of the coast (which by this time were not sleepy towns but bustling ports with huge numbers of fishing girls working on the harbour front). *Boys and Buoys* (AAG) and *The Herring Harvest* of 1873 (AAG pl. 29), were commissions for the conservative Alexander Macdonald who had required similarly pleasant works from Israels. However Archy reveals his new colours (or more accurately, lack of colours) in paintings such as *On the Bents, Aberdeen* (AAG pl. 30), a painting which revealed the very clear influence of Jozef Israels and in particular the series of a fisherwomen seated in the sand dunes, a theme that Israels had worked on frequently since 1857.¹⁰¹

Archy Reid was not alone in Scotland in his taste for sea paintings. William McTaggart and several other artists were painting sea pictures at this date. However, Archy's painting came closer to the work of his Dutch contemporaries than any other Scottish artist. *On the Bents*, for example, is a direct translation of Israels' much employed theme of a girl waiting on the shore for the return of the men from fishing - a theme which was also employed by David Artz, Bernard Blommers, German Grobe, Jacob Maris and, by the turn of the century, Jan Toorop. This painting has less sombre

⁹⁹ George Reid to John Forbes White 9 January 1871 (see Appendix A).

¹⁰⁰ George Reid to John Forbes White 21 January 1871 (see Appendix A).

¹⁰¹ Dekkers *Jozef Israels 1824-1911* Groningen 1999 p 88.

realism than many Dutch works. Like Israels Archy paints a girl seated on the sand dunes but relieves the tension somewhat by depicting her busy mending nets rather than gazing out to sea. The long, low format provided by such a composition and the subdued colours and emphasis on tone, all point to the influence of Hague School artists. In its mood and composition it is closest to Israels and is remarkably like, for example, his *In the Dunes* (untraced pl. 31).

White owned *On the Aberdeen Bents* and lent it to the Royal Scottish Academy in 1878 as *On the Sands*. The painting was admired by his contemporaries. Chalmers reported enthusiastically to White on the Scottish Academy Exhibition and noted that “Archie’s [paintings] also look well. The one I like best is the “Woman on the Sands” which is *beautiful*.”¹⁰²

George was able to take on board the Dutch style, yet retain his own unique imprint on his work. For Archy the composition would be borrowed somewhat more slavishly. Archy never achieved the fame of his brother George and, to an extent, his individuality was somewhat submerged by the tastes and influence of his older brother and by John Forbes White. As the elder son George was obliged to support the whole family and fund his younger brother's career. A persistent illness (he had an operation at one point) further reduced the family's expectations of Archy. Nor did he have the demand for portrait painting that prevented George from painting landscapes. Without the same familial responsibilities as his older brother, Archy Reid was free to travel extensively. He painted in France, The Netherlands, Spain and Italy and in 1878, he studied at the Académie Julian in Paris. Archy painted the subjects that George would like to have had the opportunity to paint himself.

There was, however, a reciprocity in the relationship of the two brothers. Throughout his career Reid tried to help his brother. He was scrupulous about avoiding any hint of nepotism, voting for election to the Royal Scottish Academy other artists before his brother if he felt that they were more talented. From 1883 Archy lived at St Lukes, George's Aberdeen home. He acted as George's representative in Aberdeen, being put in charge of hanging the Aberdeen Artists Society Exhibitions and finishing provostal portraits, which his brother had neither the time nor the inclination to work upon.

White had succeeded in persuading Aberdonians to buy Archy's work, but his approbation could not persuade anyone to buy the bleakest - *A Lone Shore* of 1874 (AAG pl. 32). White, however, was enthusiastic about this large painting, Archy's most ambitious to date;

[It] is looking splendid - that is the part on which he has been working - the foreground - which is the length of the whole thing. It is most original in subject and treatment, Why did no-one ever see the beauty of the thing and try it? It is sure to make a great hit in London. So fresh and unconventional - the strange marriage of sky and land.¹⁰³

Unlike *On the Aberdeen Bents*, in *A Lone Shore* the outcome of the fishing trip - a wrecked boat - is clearly visible. The bleakness of the subject recalls Mesdag's slightly earlier *Breakers in the North Sea* (untraced) which had won a gold medal at the Paris Salon in 1870. On his lengthy stays abroad Archy may well have seen this painting as he could Courbet's *The Wave* of 1871 (National Gallery of Scotland). However the dramatic change in Archy's style is, without doubt, principally due to his contact with Jozef Israels and to the disciplined instruction of White, which resulted in the overwhelming sense of loneliness in his work.

A Lone Shore was far bleaker than Millais' *Chill October*. Nevertheless that painting had prepared the ground for such work to be accepted in England. In 1875 *A Lone Shore* was accepted to hang at The Royal Academy. The public, however, were less receptive to its merits and it remained in the artist's studio until his death.

2.15 John Forbes White as patron

Whilst the relationship between George Reid and White remained close at this time¹⁰⁴ Reid was maturing, becoming more critical and developing his own tastes. He was making new friends and was increasingly less under White's wing. Reid felt able now to criticise White's friends and on 5th January 1872 he wrote to White in despair of Cottier, whom he believed was forsaking his artistic integrity for wealth.¹⁰⁵ Reid was referring to Cottier abandoning the art of stained glass and turning instead to his shop

¹⁰² George Paul Chalmers to John Forbes White 8 February 1874. Quoted in Edward Pinnington *George Paul Chalmers RSA and the Art of His Time* Glasgow 1896 p 182.

¹⁰³ John Forbes White to George Reid 9 August 1875.

¹⁰⁴ George Reid to John Forbes White 14 January 1871 (see Appendix A).

¹⁰⁵ George Reid to John Forbes White 5 January 1872 (see Appendix A).

business; to exporting furniture, furnishings and church fittings to the USA. Reid believed that London was having a bad effect on Cottier and implored White to counsel him. Yet in spite of these difficulties, Reid was still reliant on White for support in his own career. By mid April 1872 Reid had secured his first provostal portrait commission - a full-length portrait of Alexander Anderson. He could not handle such a large canvas in his own studio so used instead Professor Ogilvie's classroom in Marischal College. He is likely to have met Ogilvie through John Forbes White and William Geddes.

By 18th October 1872 Reid had paid off his monetary debts to White.¹⁰⁶ Yet White remained his patron, buying Reid's landscapes which - because of their sobriety and melancholic mood - he was finding impossible to sell to anyone else. In 1872 Reid was working on *Whins in Bloom* (Private Collection) a vast painting in which the flowers of the title are the principal subject. They dominate a landscape where the human element - a shepherd and his boy - are dwarfed by the sea of whins covering the slopes in the foreground. The two figures look away from the onlooker, towards their flock, thus preventing any sentimental interaction with the onlooker as would have been common in Scottish painting of the time. Their psychological distancing comes directly from Dutch art, in which the figures normally appear isolated and distant, their faces and expressions often unclear. A debt to J.F. Millet is also very likely. The subject matter, strongly horizontal composition and quiet contemplation of the central figures recall very clearly Millet's *La Bergère* of 1862-4 (Musée du Louvre, Paris).

Any idea that Macdonald might want the painting was soon dismissed - it was too bleak for his taste - as it proved to be for the critics in general. White, of course, had no such problem with the picture, understanding the precedents that had led to this paeon to realist art. Reid was anxious about the painting and tried to dissuade White from buying it until it was finished. He saw its purchase as a risky venture¹⁰⁷ but White was delighted with the painting and paid Reid £210 for it.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ The money had been lent since the time when Reid's father went bankrupt five years earlier and the final payment was £114. The total debt had been £289.5.9- but Reid had paid much off and off-set some of it with sales to White, for example *Stirling - Morning* at £15 and *Broadsea* at £60. See George Reid to John Forbes White 15 October 1872 (see Appendix A).

¹⁰⁷ George Reid to John Forbes White 23 August 1873 (see Appendix A).

¹⁰⁸ John Forbes White to George Reid 27 January 1874 (see Appendix A).

In the autumn of 1872 Chalmers came again to Aberdeen. White insisted that he stayed with him at 269 Union Street and he used a room adjoining Archy Reid's studio at 131 King Street where he began to paint his seminal *The End of The Harvest* (Skibo Castle)¹⁰⁹ The title is deceptive, for this is not a depiction of a corn harvest of late summer. Instead two women gather the last remnants of a potato crop and add them to the three heavy bags in the foreground. The evening sky suggests autumn, rooks circle above a copse of trees. The landscape is bleak and forbidding rather than full of plenty. A vestige of Victorian symbolism remains for, as the two weary women reach the end of their task, one of them is, it seems, reaching the end of her life. There is a strong emphasis on the horizon, which can be seen through the beech trees for virtually the entire width of the canvas.

Chalmers painted the work over the winter in Aberdeen. He spent a good deal of time with White, as he was also painting Rachel White's portrait, but much of his time was devoted to working on the large landscape. He found the work very taxing and in letters to James Gow, described how problematic the work was. He was reluctant to finish the painting but by the beginning of February was forced to finish it in order to submit it to The Royal Academy that year. As a result of this time limit, it is the most finished and tightest of his works, having none of the indecisive sketchiness of many other paintings on which Chalmers had laboured. Although loosely based on the countryside near Dubton House, near Montrose, the debt to the Dutch paintings around him - those in the homes of White, Macdonald and other Aberdeen collectors - could have been equally, if not more, inspirational than the Angus landscape he had left behind. This subject was a common one in Dutch Art e.g. Witsen *Woman gathering Potatoes* (Witsenhuis, Amsterdam) and Sadee *Scheveningen Women Gleaning Potatoes* of 1874 (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam).

In spite of the initial speed of Chalmers execution of the painting, by his and other people's admission, he overworked the picture. Nevertheless White bought it from him - a fact which had probably never been in doubt. Chalmers' devotion to his patron was cemented during the stay and epitomised in a warm letter, which Chalmers wrote in gratitude to White.¹¹⁰ Pinnington¹¹¹ describes how the painting became

¹⁰⁹ John Forbes White & Alexander Gibson *G. Paul Chalmers* Edinburgh 1879 p 29.

¹¹⁰ Pinnington *George Paul Chalmers & The Art of his Time* Glasgow 1896 pp 147-148.

¹¹¹ Pinnington *op. cit.* p 147.

famous almost overnight, and indeed some twenty years later Mia Reid felt no need to describe it to her readers as it was so well known.¹¹²

Chalmers was on the Hanging Committee at the Royal Scottish Academy Exhibition that year and chose to hang *The End of The Harvest* opposite Millais' *Chill October*, recognising in so doing the stylistic and thematic references between the two paintings. For both artists painting *en plein air* was only a starting point. The choice of a particularly flat landscape, the emphasis on a strong horizontal, the choice of Autumn and the resulting tonality, (though Chalmers always used colour, albeit sparingly) all came from the Dutch paintings around them in the collections of their Scottish friends.

Having been adopted by Chalmers, the subject became established as a popular one amongst Scottish artists within the next ten years; Robert McGregor painted *Clearing Potato Field* (Christies, Scotland 26 November 1998 lot 762) in 1876, Hugh Cameron *Lifting Potatoes* 1881 (Dundee, Orchar Collection) and W.D. McKay *Lifting Potatoes* 1884-5 (Dundee Art Gallery). George Reid was also painting similar realist scenes at the time - such as *Autumn* (Aberdeen Art Gallery) - a study of men cutting timber in the manner of Courbet. He had also tackled scenes of fishing, fern gathering, drawing water and mending nets a little earlier than W.D. McKay, Arthur Melville, Robert McGregor, David Murray, J.R. Reid and Stewart McGeorge, who have hitherto been credited with the introduction of this œuvre into Scotland.¹¹³ They did not pioneer the movement but instead developed what had been begun by Chalmers and Reid in the mid 1860s. What these East Lothian artists did pioneer were new compositional devices, with large figures set on the frontal plane of the composition, a vertical rather than horizontal format, with little foreground and a high viewpoint. The influence for all of these elements comes, of course, from French art and particularly the work of Jules Bastien-Lepage (1848-1884). As Duncan Macmillan has pointed out they also showed a particular interest in the practical details of agricultural life – the hoes, the scythes, the hats and footwear that characterised the farm workers of Lowland Scotland.¹¹⁴

In the autumn of 1873 Reid was again in Paris where he was painting a portrait of Major Scott of Galashiels. He took the opportunity to visit Artz and Penchart. His

¹¹² "this picture is so well known that I need not describe it" Journals of Mia Reid Vol. III p. 100.

¹¹³ Duncan Macmillan *Scottish Art 1460-1990* Mainstream 1990 p 254.

¹¹⁴ In conversation with the author.

thoughts were never far from Aberdeen, however, and through his regular correspondence with White he learned of the death of his first art teacher, Willie Niddrie.¹¹⁵ Reid and White also discussed at length their plans for the first major civic exhibition of art to be held in Aberdeen, which they, along with Archy, were organising.

¹¹⁵ George Reid to John Forbes White 14 October 1873.

CHAPTER 3

Exhibitions and Acquisitions 1873-1876

3.1 Dundee

In the 1870s John Forbes White began to forge links with the business community of Dundee. In Dundee there was a more firmly established art world than existed in Aberdeen. Various businessmen had already shown a great interest in the arts and had not only collected art for their own homes but also orchestrated the erection of a public art gallery and donated items to a permanent public collection of art.¹ Principal amongst them were three men; John M. Keiller (1851-1899), who ran a jam and marmalade business, Sir David Baxter (1793-1872), a linen manufacturer, and James G. Orchar (1825-1898), who manufactured machinery for the textile industry. Orchar was actively collecting work by the same Scottish artists whom White espoused and he owned several works by George Reid, George Paul Chalmers and Hugh Cameron.

Planning for a combined library and Art Gallery - the Albert Institute - in Dundee had begun soon after the death of Prince Albert in 1861. The land had been purchased for this purpose in 1864 and the first phase of the building was completed by September 1867. A further main gallery was added by 1873. Also in 1873 a loan exhibition was held to inaugurate this new extension. This exhibition included local loans as well as exhibits borrowed from the South Kensington Museums. Archaeological and industrial items were also displayed.²

3.2 Aberdeen Exhibition - Planning

With his business interests in Dundee John Forbes White would have been well aware of the preparations for this exhibition and it is very likely that it spurred him on to plan a similar one for Aberdeen. This exhibition was scheduled to open on 1st August 1873. Aberdeen's newly built County and Municipal Buildings (or the Town

¹ Orchar had donated his *Old Letters* as early as 1874.

² David Scruton The Victoria Galleries Dundee Art Galleries & Museums 1989 p 18.

House as it is known locally) was to be the venue, its grand Town & County Hall and the two large adjoining rooms serving as an exhibition space.

White realised that, in order to borrow important works by Old Masters, he needed to elicit the help of the local aristocracy. The Marquis of Huntly had read White's "Mason" article, and had been given the incentive to meet the author. He visited White at his home at 269 Union Street, where the two men discussed the proposed exhibition and White secured the assistance of the Marquis with the venture, who agreed to sit on the Finance and Arrangements Committee.³ Many loans from important local families were secured - even Queen Victoria lent work, including statuettes by Boehm and Baron Marochetti and busts by William Brodie.

The Loan Exhibition of Works of Art opened on 1st August. The entrance charge was set at 1s. from 10am til 4pm but until sunset the exhibition remained open with a reduced entrance fee of 6d. so that working people could visit. A season ticket was also available at 5s. A vast amount of paintings, both ancient and modern, were displayed as well as silver, ceramics and antique lace (much of it lent by Mrs White). The University lent a selection of its finest illuminated manuscripts. The Aberdeen gun runner and industrialist, Thomas Blake Glover (1838-1911) (whose full and fascinating life included his being a founding father of Japan's industrial revolution and being married to a Japanese woman, Tsuru, who was the model for Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* of 1904), lent ivory chess pieces, bronze vases and furniture which he had sent over from his home in Nagasaki. Whilst showing the cultural wealth of the north-east in the broadest sense, for Reid and White the prime motivation for staging such an exhibition was the opportunity it afforded to exhibit contemporary art; the work of their Scottish and Dutch friends.

White and Reid (who was in France) corresponded at length throughout the year on the subject of the exhibition. A recent exhibition had been somewhat of a failure and both Reid and White were concerned to make sure that their exhibition was a success.⁴ The selection of works was in their hands but they delegated the logistics of moving the works to others.

³ John Forbes White to George Reid 20 April 1873. (see Appendix A).

⁴ John Forbes White to George Reid 20 April 1873. (see Appendix A).

White was not generally keen to lend his paintings,⁵ but saw the exhibition as an opportunity to create an aesthetically aware climate in Aberdeen and to begin the organisation for a permanent exhibition space - a public art gallery - for his home city. With this in mind he emptied both his homes for the purpose, lending a total of forty-six paintings, twenty-seven etchings and engravings, a Wedgwood dish painted by Émile-Aubert Lessore (1805-1876), various pieces of Delft china and original drawings by Fra Bartolomeo and Van Dyck. Alexander Macdonald lent eighteen paintings; virtually his entire collection at that time.

At this exhibition Aberdeen's wealth of Dutch art was seen together for the first time. There were no fewer than eight paintings by Israels, ten by Mollinger, five by David Artz, one by Mollinger's teacher, Willem Roelofs, another by Gerard Bilders and two by J.H.L. De J.B. Van Moer. There were six works by Johannes Bosboom, five of which belonged to White, including the aforementioned *Interior of Bakenesse Church, Haarlem* (pl. 7). In short, the exhibition contained a larger collection of the work of these men than had ever been exhibited anywhere else in Great Britain at this date. More Hague School art was shown than was to be exhibited for many years to come. Indeed there was more in this one exhibition than existed in any Glasgow collections even five years later.⁶

Belgian art was represented with two paintings by Paul Clays (1819-1900). Of French artists Macdonald lent *La Jeunesse* by Jean Aubert (1824-1906). Two paintings by Pierre Edouard Frère (1819-1886) were also lent. Most importantly the catalogue provides evidence that White owned a painting by J.B.C. Corot (1796-1875), entitled *La Rivière*.⁷ This fact confirms that he was one of the first men in Scotland to own a painting by this artist, who was to prove so influential to Scottish artists soon after. White also lent a sketch by the young Munich born artist, Hubert von Herkomer (1849-1914). George Paul Chalmers was represented with *Reflected Light* and the

⁵ John Forbes White to George Reid 9 January 1871 (see Appendix A).

⁶ see Elizabeth Bird "International Glasgow" *Connoisseur* 1973 p 250.

⁷ Robaut's *Catalogue Raisonné et Illustré de L'Oeuvre de Corot* lists some twelve paintings of this subject, but makes no mention of the 1873 Exhibition or of White having owned such a painting. White had bought the painting from Durand Ruel for £40.

large *End of the Harvest*. From the University came Reid's portraits of John Stuart Blackie and George Macdonald.

Whilst most of the foreign paintings were still in the hands of White and a lesser proportion with Alexander Macdonald, the 1873 exhibition catalogue shows clearly that other collectors in Aberdeen were also beginning to acquire the work of the artists whom White most admired and promoted. Though loathe to part with any of them, White had managed to disseminate the work of his Dutch, Belgian and French friends into the Aberdeen collecting community.

With so many paintings on view, the hang was inevitably very crushed (pls. 33 & 34). Chalmers, who had supervised the hang at the Royal Scottish Academy that year, was upset by this, believing that his own paintings had been greatly disadvantaged as a result.⁸

The exhibition in Aberdeen ran on into the New Year, having been extended by one month. Throughout that time frequent mention of it in the local papers encouraged visitors. These articles emphasised the educational importance of the exhibition and the egalitarian approach of the organisers who had created a show of "art for all".⁹ It drew huge crowds and over the period had a total of 92,489 visitors. Significantly it was visited by many different echelons of society, a fact evinced by letters in the local papers pleading for evening lighting so that the exhibits could be viewed by the working men and women who could not visit it during the day. In spite of the visitor figures the exhibition lost money, but this was offset by the guarantors, including John Forbes White.¹⁰

Reid and White wrote their own review for the Aberdeen Journal, presumably feeling that no-one else was capable of doing so. They divided the article - Reid reviewed the work of Dyce, Phillip, Erskine Nicol, Chalmers, McTaggart and K. Hallswell whilst White dealt with Herdman, Cassie, Giles and other local artists. The vast majority of the paintings had not been exhibited before and were being seen by the

⁸ George Reid to John Forbes White 23 August 1873 (see Appendix A).

⁹ Aberdeen Free Press 5 August 1873.

¹⁰ George Reid to John Forbes White 14 October 1873 (see Appendix A).

public and for the first time.¹¹ Immediately they drew attention. One who had seen Reid and White's review was W. Craibe Angus (1830-1899) whose opinion of the review clearly met with Reid's disdain;

"I had a letter from Mr Walker - enclosing one from Mr W Craibe Angus - picture dealer in Glasgow" reported Reid to White, "- W[alker] evidently wished to draw out some information as to the authorship of certain notices in the Journal and Free Press - and as the letter of W Craibe Angus was composed of a series of several sketches upon these criticisms - I have no doubt enlightenment was expected - However I could throw no light on the mystery and returned the letter as requested - but some of the things were too good so I copied a few of them out - and now enclose them - do you not feel humbled and snubbed - and nowhere? Read it - and then put it in the fire - but don't forget henceforth that "colour and tone are but accidents of art" - impress that strongly on your memory."¹²

Although Craibe Angus was an Aberdonian and almost an exact contemporary of John Forbes White, it is clear from this extract that he did not know White or Reid. Whilst in Aberdeen Craibe Angus worked as a cobbler, only turning to dealing in art and antiques once he had moved to Glasgow where he had, apparently, been set up in business by Daniel Cottier.¹³ His shop in Glasgow (which was described by a contemporary as a *bric-a-brac* shop rather than a gallery)¹⁴ opened in 1874, the year the Aberdeen exhibition closed. Only one year earlier his appreciation of The Hague School was clearly not developed as Reid's scathing remarks regarding his opinions on tonality and colour reveal. Craibe Angus has been noted for his dealing in Dutch 19th century art¹⁵ but he seems to have been working on a small scale before this date. It may be that this introduction to such a wealth of the art of The Hague School provided the incentive to work with Cottier and bring such paintings to Glasgow. His familial ties suggest that he was a connoisseur of Dutch art but in fact, whilst his art dealings earned him a living - ultimately his clients included Sir William Burrell and W.A.

¹¹ Some had. J.H.L. De J.B. Van Moer, *Doge's Palace Cattle* and *Arnheim*, both of which were owned by John Forbes White, for example, had been exhibited at The London International of 1862.

¹² George Reid to John Forbes White 14 October 1873.

¹³ see Frances Fowle Alexander Reid in Context: Collecting and Dealing in Scotland in the late 19th and early 20th century PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh 1994 p 388.

¹⁴ J.A.K. "The late Mr Craibe Angus by One Who Knew Him" The Scots Pictorial 15 January 1900 pp 17-18.

¹⁵ Elizabeth Bird "International Glasgow" Connoisseur 1973 p 250.

Coats - his principal passion in life seems to have been not art, but the writings of Robert Burns.¹⁶

If the Aberdeen exhibition and Reid and White's review did indeed affect Craibe Angus' decisions then it is true to say that White's collection had a huge effect on collecting and taste in Glasgow some years later. Certainly White did not buy from Glasgow dealers - much of his collecting had been done before they set up business. Conversely he seems to have had an effect on their selection of work, if not directly, then through his friend Daniel Cottier and by staging exhibitions such as that of 1873.

To an extent the 1873 exhibition was an altruistic gesture, an early and very clear act of generosity and willingness on the part of the wealthy and upper classes to facilitate the "betterment" of the other members of society. Furthermore it made all of Scotland aware of the wealth of foreign and British art in the north-east of Scotland and also put into the minds of the councillors and the wealthy the fact that, unlike smaller cities like Dundee, Aberdeen had no permanent place to exhibit art. By bringing together this body of disparate collectors White may well have been the catalyst which led to their commitment, some ten years later, to build a public art gallery and to provide the works of art for the new public collections.

Two months after the exhibition in Aberdeen had opened John Forbes White and his family visited Mürren, in Switzerland. Daniel Cottier's wife was also with them. White wrote to Reid with tremendous enthusiasm of the works he had acquired, for he had come from Scheveningen, where Johannes Bosboom had rented a room that year. Bosboom had moved away from his normal subject of painting church interiors and had completed some sketches of Scheveningen, its beach and the sea.¹⁷ Not content with the (at least) five works which he already owned by Bosboom (and had lent to the Aberdeen exhibition), White bought many more;

Dear man of paint.....We came here laden with sketches - a beautiful small oil by Bosboom - a fine watercolour...and the original oil study of "La tête de Jeanne" on which he is to work and lighten. He is to paint a fine picture for us - an out-of-door subject - all about which I shall tell you when I return. I bought

¹⁶ Craibe Angus went on to work as an agent for Daniel Cottier, who apparently set him up in business. Cottier acquired Dutch pictures from Elbert J. Van Wisselingh - especially paintings by Matthijs Maris - and sent them on to Craibe Angus in Glasgow. Craibe Angus' daughter, Isabella, married Van Wisselingh in 1887. See J.A.K. *op. cit.* p 17.

¹⁷ See The Hague School - Masters of the 19th Century London 1983 p 171.

also from Bosboom a watercolour (large) of the interior of a church - which promises to be very fine ...He is a very clever fellow.¹⁸

White was at his happiest when mixing with artists and buying work by his friends. He brought these works back to Scotland and distributed them amongst his Aberdeen friends. One of them, for example, (possibly the large watercolour mentioned in his letter to Reid) came into the possession of a member of the Crombie family, and is now in Aberdeen Art Gallery.

3.3 The Royal Academy of 1873

White took time off in 1873 to visit another exhibition - The Royal Academy's show - and in July wrote a scathing review of it in *The Contemporary Review*. In this long article his despair of English Art is palpable and even artists whom he had formerly admired, he now found disappointing. White began by bemoaning the fact that Whistler's work was not on view. He missed too, the "tender grace and poetic sentiment"¹⁹ of the paintings of George Mason, who had died recently. He saw nothing in the exhibited work of Millais to rival *Chill October* and was severe on the older academicians who "continue to do their utmost to make the Academy a laughing stock". He recommended that they be pensioned off "on the express condition that they paint or at least exhibit no more".²⁰ White's reprobation is not confined to the older fraternity and he damns the recent work of Yeames and Calderon whom, he assumed, had "cast in their lot with Mr Frith".²¹ In general he believed that "art in England seems to have entered on that period of decay which is inseparably connected with lavish expenditure and uneducated taste",²² and he lamented the demise of a Nation which produced Hogarth, Constable and Turner. In spite of White's love of classical art he saw no merit in the hard-lined work of Albert Moore, G.D. Leslie and Alma-Tadema whom he found "mechanical in their treatment".²³ Echoing Daumier's

¹⁸ John Forbes White to George Reid 8 October 1873.

¹⁹ John Forbes White "The Royal Academy of 1873" *The Contemporary Review* p 266.

²⁰ *Ibid.* p 267.

²¹ *Ibid.* p 267.

²² *Ibid.* p 268.

²³ *Ibid.* p 275.

credo, “il faut être de son temps”, White contrasted the failings of such imagined scenes with what he believed was a worthier art - the depiction of the present;

But while the passionate wailing of the human heart must have an interest for all ages, what is the use of seeking for it in the history of long-dead civilisations? Are there not in the life around us, among the people whom we see daily, interests and incidents sufficiently tragic? If, as we believe, “the artist must be the child of his own time” is it not equally true that he is the greatest artist that sees and feels and lays before us the joys and sorrows of those with whom we are linked by the closest ties of common life?²⁴

White compared Alma-Tadema’s art, “sentimental, exaggerated and forced” with that of his countryman Israels. In Israels’ painting *The Poor of the Village* he found all that was wanting in Alma Tadema’s work; true pathos, the dignity of the poor, vigorous painting and subtle, broken colour which resolved itself when seen from a distance. Next to Israels in stature was Hubert von Herkomer. White praised his *The Poor of the Village* and in so doing he was reminded of Carlyle who wrote, “the ideal has always to grow in the real”. For White these two realists are “both Idealists in the best sense”.²⁵ White praised the work of Alphonse Legros, specifically *La Bénédiction de la Mer* (Sheffield City Art Galleries) finding in it similarities with Jules Breton’s *Bénédiction des Blés*, a painting White may have seen at the Salon of 1857, where it was awarded a second class medal. He also admired J.C. Hook who, although obviously not on the same pinnacle as Israels, Herkomer and Breton, nevertheless, “is one of the few English landscape painters who combine human sentiment with landscape effects, and make us intimately acquainted with the people of the place”.²⁶ White commented on several of Hook’s paintings, one of which, *Fishing by Proxy* was to be bought by Alexander Macdonald that year as was *The Sanctuary* by John Pettie (both AAG), which White also admired.

White compared the English landscape artists unfavourably with their French counterparts - Daubigny, Rousseau and Troyon - though he did admire the work of Paul Falconer Poole (1807-1879), for his “rich harmonies of yellow, brown and blue

²⁴ *Ibid.* pp 276-9.

²⁵ *Ibid.* p 279.

²⁶ *Ibid.* p 280.

[which] remind one of Poussin or Tintoretto’’²⁷ (White was to buy *The Dragon's Cavern* by Poole four years later).

White’s thirty page diatribe found little to praise in English art and (with the exception of Tissot and Alma Tadema) a great deal to praise in French and Dutch art. He laid great emphasis on the ability of an artist to convey the impression of a moment, to convey the real world and to handle colour and paint in a vigorous and effective way.

In summing up White in his review extolled the depiction of the real world, a world inhabited by the poor, but a noble and beautiful poor. He admired most the ability of an artist to paint the impression of a moment in a fresh and unmannered way. These were precisely the qualities that he advocated to his British artist friends, qualities which he, by and large, only saw in the art of French, Dutch and Belgian artists and which he found lacking in much English art of the day. White’s own purchases matched these ideals though in one purchase at least - a large painting by Corot entitled *Pastorale - Souvenir d'Italie* - he was happy to forego the contemporary realism of his most admired artist-friends in order to become the owner of a significant work by one of France’s best-known and most admired artists.

3.4 Jean Baptiste Camille Corot

White’s ownership of Corot’s *La Rivière* was remarkable in British terms. It had been exhibited at the International Exhibition in London in 1871 and White bought it, either in 1872 or 1873, from Durand Ruel for £40, thus making it in all probability the first Corot owned by a Scottish collector. The only other Corots appearing in Scotland at the same time were *Morning*, which was for sale for £262 at The Glasgow Institute in 1872, and, some time later, *Landscape with Figures* which was owned by James Duncan of Benmore and lent by him to the Glasgow Institute in 1876.²⁸

²⁷ *Ibid.* p 293.

²⁸ D. Croal Thomson refers to another painting by Corot entitled *La Toilette*, owned by James Duncan of Benmore and lent by him to the Glasgow Institute in 1872. However, it is not listed in The Dictionary of Exhibitors at the Annual Exhibitions of the R.G.I. 1861-1989, compiled by Roger Billcliffe.

Corot had exhibited a landscape at the London International in 1862 so White, who had visited the exhibition, may well have been familiar with Corot's work since then. Certainly, as early as April 1873, Corot was already very familiar to White. When describing the French countryside, he saw it very much in terms of Corot's art;

France though not a beautiful country in many respects yet charms and interests even in its most monotonous - the bright air and silvery colour, the long, level broken up here and there by gleams of the great rivers and lines of feathery poplars, the quaint and rich architecture, all recall Corot and make me, even a stranger accustomed to other landscape, believe in La belle France.²⁹

In spite of the fact that White owned this small painting by Corot at such an early date, in all later descriptions of White's collection *La Rivière* hardly features, the reason being that soon after White had bought another, larger Corot, which was to become the benchmark by which he judged all subsequent paintings. This painting was *Pastorale - Souvenir d'Italie* (GMAG pl. 35).

Exactly when and how White acquired *Pastorale - Souvenir d'Italie* has been much disputed, not least by members of White's own family. Bird gives an impossibly early date of 1870.³⁰ White's daughter, Ina Mary Harrower, apparently quoting her father, suggests a date of 1874,³¹ yet contradicts this when, nine years later, she gives a date of 1877.³² Writing in 1970 Dorothea, White's youngest child, confirms her father's dating of the purchase at 1873.³³ Ina Mary Harrower states that White did indeed own the first Corot in Scotland but that this was *Pastorale - Souvenir d'Italie* rather than *La Rivière* which she mentions, in passing, as "a smaller Corot of rich enamelled surface [which] was also one of his especial delights",³⁴ (Harrower's mistake is repeated by Irwin).³⁵ In 1892 White was reported to have said that the painting had been with him for eighteen years.³⁶ This would give the most likely date of 1874. The

²⁹ John Forbes White to George Reid 20 April 1873.

³⁰ Bird *op. cit.* p 251.

³¹ Ina Mary Harrower *John Forbes White* Edinburgh 1918 p 38.

³² Ina Mary Harrower "Joseph Israels and his Aberdeen Friend" *Aberdeen University Review* Vol. XIV, 2 March 1927 p 110.

³³ Fyfe & Minto *John Forbes White, Miller, Collector, Photographer 1831-1904* Edinburgh 1970 p 13.

³⁴ Ina Mary Harrower *John Forbes White* Edinburgh & London 1908 p 42.

³⁵ David and Francina Irwin, *Scottish Painters at Home and Abroad* Faber & Faber 1975 p 378.

³⁶ Ina Mary Harrower *John Forbes White* Edinburgh 1918 p 38.

price of the painting also caused confusion, Ina Mary stating that her father had paid 800 guineas³⁷ and Dorothea £600.³⁸

White's own, recently discovered, hand-written account of his collection affirms that he bought the painting, from his friend Daniel Cottier, for £950 on 3rd September 1874. Therefore Ina Mary Harrower's claim that her father had brought the painting back from Paris himself³⁹ is clearly incorrect. This theory was repeated by T.J. Honeyman, writing in 1953, (though presumably quoting Harrower, since he too, gives an acquisition date of 1874).⁴⁰

Although White bought the painting from Cottier he might well have seen *Pastorale - Souvenir d'Italie* when it was on display at the Salon as he was in France at the time.⁴¹ (It was owned at the time by the elderly dancer and actor, and owner of at least fourteen paintings by Corot, M. Cléophas).⁴² White's reasons for collecting Corot were certainly deeply personal, rather than being formed by Cottier (although he was a great champion of Corot's art). White was a true connoisseur of Corot. This is revealed in his description of the French landscape in terms of Corot's art, and in the fact that he owned two other works by Corot.⁴³ His deep and lasting admiration for Corot, however, is most passionately expressed when he came, through financial necessity, to part with *Pastorale - Souvenir d'Italie* in 1892. In a detailed and lengthy treatise on the painting (quoted in full by his daughter Ina Mary many years later) White describes the painting as his "friend and advisor for eighteen years, my standard of ideal, yet true, landscape". White extolled Corot's ability to glean the most important features from the landscape so that, whilst it is a true landscape, it is also idealised as Corot has selected and subordinated the detail. White sees this as a triumph of realism and quite at variance with the work of a photographer or, for that

³⁷ Ina Mary Harrower "Joseph Israels and his Aberdeen Friend" Aberdeen University Review Vol. XIV, 2 March 1927 p 110.

³⁸ Fyfe & Minto *op. cit.* p 13.

³⁹ Ina Mary Harrower "Studies of Fruit by Courbet" Apollo Vol. L No 296 1949 p 95.

⁴⁰ T.J. Honeyman Catalogue of French Paintings, Glasgow Art Gallery 1953 p 14.

⁴¹ Ina Mary Harrower John Forbes White Edinburgh & London 1908 p 39.

⁴² Shawa Corot Paris & New York 1996 cat. no. 150. Corot painted the work in the Spring of 1873, in the studio which M. Cléophas had put at his disposal. See A. Robaut Catalogue Raisonné et Illustré de L'Oeuvre de Corot no 2107.

⁴³ Ina Mary Harrower "Joseph Israels and his Aberdeen Friend" Aberdeen University Review Vol. XIV, 2 March 1927 p 111.

matter, most British Victorian artists. He admired the painting's "facile ease, its exuberant joy" and described Corot as a "master of light, air, breadth, simplicity, and harmony". He refuted the suggestion that the painting was sketchy, but encouraged viewing it from a distance, so that it could become satisfying and complete. "The splendid cloud overhanging the lake is a confused mass of dove, rose, amber, yellow and grey" he wrote, "which at a fair distance resolves itself into lovely colour. The leafage is put in with rapid sure touches, and the blue and red flowers are touched in with perfect knowledge of effect. All is suggestive; a master revealing in the fantasie [sic] he is playing, in the harmony he is evolving. He is a creator". White wondered whether Corot should have laboured more in the work but he concluded that "as it stands it is a marvel of spontaneous artistic freedom and individuality".⁴⁴ In such an interpretation White is viewing the painting as an impression and in so doing illustrates his very modern understanding of art. There are echoes of Ruskin's eulogy of Turner's *Slave Ship* (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Mass.) which he had described as a "daring conception – ideal in the highest sense of the word –....based on the purest truth, and wrought out with the concentrated knowledge of a life" but Ruskin lays emphasis not so much on Turner's freedom and impressionistic technique, but on the fact that, in spite of his methods, he nevertheless manages to depict "the ship buoyant, bending and full of motion" and "the power, majesty, and deathfulness of the open, deep, illimitable Sea". White was not concerned with verisimilitude, with anecdote or narrative, which remained the concern of many artists and most British art critics of the day. That a painting could move one through colour, tone and light rather than through sentiment was an almost revolutionary concept for the Victorian to take on board, yet this message had now become White's principle cry.

White's writings on Corot reveal his distance from British artists and critics, but are closely aligned to the writings of Émile Zola, who, although no admirer of Corot's nymphs and fantasies, could nevertheless delight in the apparent physical spontaneity and freshness of his art; "His manner of painting is just as unusual as his way of seeing", he wrote, "He uses astonishingly broad sweeps, the highest degree of simplification. His work seems like rough sketches put down in haste for fear of losing

⁴⁴ Ina Mary Harrower John Forbes White Edinburgh & London 1908 p 40.

the first impression. One feels that the entire phenomenon takes place in the eye and hand of the artist. He sees a landscape at a glance, in the reality of its general effect and he interprets in his own way, conserving the truth and conveying the emotion he has experienced.”⁴⁵

The lack of detail and rough finish of the painting which White so admired, had also been noted by Corot's old friend Théophile Silvestre, who believed, incorrectly, that these qualities might cause its rejection by the Salon Committee.⁴⁶ White regarded these features as assets rather than faults. Like Zola, White championed art that might be imperfect in finish, but that was individual and alive. In White's joy in the subject of the painting his liberal education under the polymath J.S. Blackie is revealed. The dancing nymphs and faun pictured in an idyllic classical landscape (the aspects of Corot's late work which were despised by Zola, Sickert and the art critic Frank Rutter) were, perhaps, particularly appealing to White, whose teacher Blackie had inspired in him a love of all things classical and had encouraged his travels to Italy and Greece by recounting tales of his own;

We are back in the haunts of the Dryads and Nereids; we live with Theocritus in Sicily. It is life free from care and responsibility - a dream of early Greek legend We are back in the old world of Sappho and Alcaeus, of Horace and Virgil.⁴⁷

White was also drawn to the painting because of its soft and muted tonalities:

the rosy-fingered dawn in the amber-touched cloud that floats lightly over the grey lake and the villa on the height. The mist lies on the bosom of the olive-covered hill beyond the great trees and their open arches under which four Nymphs dance and play the tambourine in the abandon of the joy of life.⁴⁸

The cool silvery tones of Corot's late work, such as *Pastorale - Souvenir d'Italie*, resemble The Hague School artists' work and, with their soft tonalities and muted colours, were immediately familiar to, and appreciated by, White. Corot had first visited Italy in 1825, returning again in the early 1830s. He had already admired the handling of landscape by the Dutch painters, particularly their preference for a low

⁴⁵ Émile Zola "Mon Salon" *Ecrits sur l'art* p 215, quoted in Steven Adams *The Barbizon School and the Origins of Impressionism* London 1994 p 190.

⁴⁶ Quoted by A. Robaut *Catalogue Raisonné et Illustré de L'Oeuvre de Corot* p 284.

⁴⁷ Harrower *op. cit.* 1908 p 40.

skyline and light coming from the sky. By combining the soft light and delicate touch of the Northern School with mythical, classical Italian subjects Corot was providing White with his ideal painting.

Throughout the next twenty years White's large painting by Corot was exhibited, discussed, criticised and admired. It undoubtedly had an enormous effect on Chalmers, whom Hardie describes as a disciple of Corot, citing his last work, *Autumn Morning* (untraced) as revealing particularly how Chalmers adopted the "atmospheric transparency and depth" so apparent in *Pastorale, Souvenir d'Italie*.⁴⁹ McConkey⁵⁰ has pointed out the significance of Corot for several of the group of artists who subsequently became known as The Glasgow Boys. This is particularly evident in the work of Macaulay Stevenson whose *A Song Without Words* (untraced)⁵¹ in its composition, treatment and mood is, in effect, a homage to White's painting. The Glasgow artist David Murray (1849-1943) as Macmillan has shown,⁵² was also influenced by Corot and specifically by his later work such as *Pastorale - Souvenir d'Italie*.

White's holding of two or perhaps three paintings by Corot, and particularly the large *Pastorale*, seems to have had a revelatory effect on this younger generation of artists, giving them their first introduction to contemporary French art several years before any of them went to France and also before Glasgow dealers - such as Alexander Reid - began to deal in such work.⁵³ Henley remarked as early as 1892 that the art of Corot, Diaz, Daubigny, Rousseau, Monticelli and Delacroix was welcomed far more in Scotland than in England but he attributed this fact to Cottier's dealings in art.⁵⁴ Cottier was dealing not only in Scotland but in England (from his shop in Pall Mall which opened in 1873) and also in the United States. He was more successful in selling these artists' work in Scotland because the Scots - and particularly John Forbes

⁴⁸ *Ibid* p 41.

⁴⁹ William Hardie *Scottish Painting 1837-1939* London 1976 p 76.

⁵⁰ Kenneth McConkey "“Silver Twilights” and “Rose Pink Dawns” - British Collectors and Critics of Corot at the turn of the century." *J.B.C. Corot* Tokyo 1989-1990 p 31.

⁵¹ This work is illustrated in G. Baldwin Brown *The Glasgow School of Painters* Glasgow 1907.

⁵² Duncan Macmillan *Scottish Art 1460-1990* Mainstream 1990 p 253.

⁵³ Frances Fowle gives a date of c.1880 for Reid's first dealings in Corot and does not perceive a market of any size for Corot's work in Glasgow before the mid 1880s. See "Alexander Reid: The Influential Dealer" *Journal of the Scottish Society for Art History* Vol. 2 1997 p 26.

⁵⁴ W. E. Henley *Collection Cottier Catalogue* Durand-Ruel Paris 1892 p 11.

White - were receptive and appreciative of it. Since 1862 they had been collecting the art of The Hague School. From such foundations it was an easy step to admire the art of these French artists whom White also championed.

3.5 Gustave Courbet

At the same time as White brought back the large painting by Corot from Paris he also brought back a smaller picture by another French artist whose reputation in Britain was, as yet, completely untested. This painting, measuring 14 by 22 cm, was a still life of apples by Gustave Courbet (1819-1877). It was a recent painting, being one of the many still lifes Courbet had painted whilst imprisoned in Sainte-Pélagie following his involvement in the dismantling of the Vendôme Column on 16 May 1871, and a little later, when a prisoner on parole in Dr Duval's clinic at Neuilly. These still lifes, painted during his stay in prison, when he was denied live models and his sole inspiration came from fruit brought by his friends and family, constitute one of the most important phases in Courbet's career. Upon his release he abandoned the theme and rarely returned to it. Dating from the early 1870s, the paintings are magnificently simple in subject, vigorously handled and reveal parallel influences with Manet, Monet and Cézanne, the last of whom expressed admiration for Courbet's "limitless talent".⁵⁵ In White's painting, three apples, with a fourth one placed above them, were posed on a cream coloured plate with a blue rim. Like Courbet's other still lifes of the period, the background would have been simple and dark, and the still life strongly and dramatically lit. The painting was sold at Dowells in February 1906 and remains untraced. In Ina Mary's description of her father's painting,⁵⁶ it is possible to sense his delight in owning this work by Courbet. Indeed she reports that when his friends (many of whom were artists) admired the Corot he would bring to their attention the "supreme beauty of its texture".⁵⁷ Zola had once described Courbet as "un magnifique classique, qui reste dans la plus large tradition des Titien, Véronèse et des

⁵⁵ John Rewald *Histoire de l'Impressionisme* Paris 1955 pp 116.

⁵⁶ See Ina Mary Harrower "Studies of Fruit by Courbet" *Apollo* Vol. L No 296 1949 pp 95-98.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* p 95.

Rembrandt”⁵⁸ White may have been aware of Zola’s praise of Courbet. He would also certainly have admired similar qualities in Courbet’s work to those identified by him. As with the Corot the fact that White owned work by Courbet at this very early date is a significant fact, but one ignored by almost all later writers looking at collecting in Scotland (the exception being White’s daughter, Ina Mary Harrower). A.J. McNeill Reid, for example, in an article entitled “Courbet Paintings in Scotland”⁵⁹ omits to mention White’s paintings, understandably perhaps, since his father, Alexander Reid, has since been credited with bringing this artist’s work to Scotland.

3.6 Changing Roles

As George Reid's artistic reputation increased he gained in confidence. Gradually his correspondence with White reveals that he was taking the advisory role - the pupil was now attempting to guide his teacher. In the same way that he advised Macdonald on his collecting so too he came to feel confident enough to advise White. Thus in 1873 he recommended that White sell a painting by Peter Graham, since Reid felt that it would not gain in value, and buy instead a painting by Jozef Israels.⁶⁰ By now Reid felt able to comment on White’s art historical opinions and even confidently to question those of John Ruskin.⁶¹

As White’s influence on the ever more confident George Reid waned, however, his influence on other Scottish artists continued, and indeed increased. In 1874, for example, George Paul Chalmers and the Aberdeen artist and pupil of Peter Graham, Joseph Farquharson (1846-1935), travelled together to Europe. First they went to Paris, visiting the Salon, where Chalmers admired particularly a landscape by Daubigny. From there they went on to Antwerp, in order to see Rubens' *Descent from the Cross*, which Chalmers had painted from an engraving when a boy. The chief purpose of the visit, however, was to see the work of Rembrandt and to visit Jozef Israels. At The Hague they were warmly received by Israels, whom Chalmers had first

⁵⁸ Émile Zola *Salons at études de critique d'art* XII 1015, quoted by William Kloss in “Émile Zola and the Old Masters” *Émile Zola and the Arts* (editors Jean-Max Guieu, & Alison Hilton) Georgetown University Press 1988 p 36.

⁵⁹ A.J. McNeill Reid “Courbet Paintings in Scotland” *Scottish Art Review* No 9 (1963) pp 1- 4.

⁶⁰ George Reid to John Forbes White 23 August 1873 (see Appendix A).

⁶¹ George Reid to John Forbes White 14 October 1873.

met when Israels was visiting White in Scotland. From there they travelled to Amsterdam, where they ended the tour by viewing - and being deeply moved by - the paintings of Rembrandt.⁶² It is probable that the tastes and inclinations of Scotland's champion of contemporary Dutch and French art, John Forbes White, influenced their route. The first hand contact with Dutch artists certainly had a marked effect on Chalmers' companion, the younger Farquharson, whose early attempts at painting (pl. 36) reveal a marked debt to the Dutch School, and in particular to the works of David Artz. Farquharson's many studies of mothers walking with children through wooded landscapes recall Israels' paintings of the same subject, such as *Evantide in the Woods* c.1860-1872 (Groningen, Groninger Museum). Israels also, as in this work, painted many studies of snow, the theme that was to become the salient aspect of Farquharson's work.⁶³

3.7 The Rebuilding of Kepplestone

Whilst White was collecting Courbet and Corot, Alexander Macdonald was also continuing to buy art at a pace, but his tastes remained more pedestrian; the anecdotal always to the fore and English artists, or the work of the London Scots, most favoured. By 1873 he owned works not only by Cameron, Reid and Chalmers but also by Pettie and Orchardson, Hook and William Etty. The early 1870s were a particularly busy time for him in terms of collecting and partly in order to accommodate his growing collection, Macdonald decided to commission an architect to redesign and extend his home, Kepplestone. Macdonald had probably moved to Kepplestone c.1863, shortly after the death of his father. Macdonald was paralysed from the waist down and confined to a wheelchair. For this reason all the public rooms in his home were on the ground floor. Contrary to the view expressed in the writings of Irwin⁶⁴ and Brogdon⁶⁵ Macdonald did not select Aberdeen's most talented architect,

⁶² John Forbes White & Alexander Gibson *G Paul Chalmers* Edinburgh 1879 pp 31-2.

⁶³ So closely was Farquharson associated with snowscenes and particularly studies of dead sheep in the snow that he gained the sobriquet "frozen mutton".

⁶⁴ Michael Dey and Francina Irwin *Alexander Macdonald: From Mason to Maecenas* 1985 p 7.

⁶⁵ W.A. Brogdon *Aberdeen - An Illustrated Architectural Guide* Edinburgh 1986 p 119.

A. Marshall Mackenzie,⁶⁶ to draw up the alterations, but the far less admired J. Russel Mackenzie.⁶⁷

Like Seaton Cottage, Kepplestone was built onto a much older house. Indeed its origins lay in a 17th century farmhouse. However, Mackenzie's plans for the house were directly opposed to Cottier's work for White at both Seaton Cottage and 269 Union Street. The plans dismayed Reid, whose principal objections to what was proposed was the positioning of the windows, the resulting lack of light and the projected function of the various rooms. There was to be no picture gallery, which Reid evidently felt Macdonald's collection merited. Though private galleries were a rare phenomenon at that date, White's house at 269 Union Street had set a precedent and Reid, White and Chalmers all disliked a crowded hang.⁶⁸ Although the aesthetics of the exterior of the house are not mentioned in White and Reid's correspondence it may be assumed that both men - whose own homes were the acme of aesthetic design - would have been equally dismayed by Mackenzie's preference for the steep gables and decorative bargeboards of the Highland vernacular.

Reid and John Forbes White won the argument in terms of the lighting - large windows to the east and south were installed - but there was no compromise over a picture gallery and in contemporary photographs it is clear that the paintings were hung in a crushed and crowded arrangement in the dining and drawing rooms (pls. 37 & 38). Reid and White had not managed to change drastically the physical structure of Mackenzie's alterations, but their effect on the interior of the house was marked.

On 12th January 1875, his birthday, Daniel Cottier opened his London showroom at 8 Pall Mall and, the same week, he began work on the interior of Kepplestone. The walls of all the public rooms were decorated with elaborate designs, very similar to those Cottier had created for the home of White's mother, Bridgefield

⁶⁶ Although not Provost of Aberdeen (1883-1886), as stated in Brogdon, A Marshall Mackenzie was, nonetheless, an important local figure and Aberdeen's most famous architect of the late nineteenth century. Amongst his most notable buildings are Aberdeen Art Gallery and the façade of Marischal College.

⁶⁷ J. Russel Mackenzie was trained by Mackenzie & Matthews, an Aberdeen firm of architects. After a brief spell working in York he began practising in Aberdeen c.1860. He formed a partnership with Duncan Macmillan from 1878 until 1883 when Mackenzie went bankrupt. Following bankruptcy Mackenzie emigrated to South Africa. He designed the Goldfield Club in Johannesburg before his sudden death in 1889.

⁶⁸ George Reid to John Forbes White 14 October 1873 (see Appendix A).

on the north bank of the River Don, near Seaton Cottage (pl. 39). At Kepplestone a severe Greek key pattern and anthemions were used above the picture rail in both the drawing and dining rooms and their ceilings, the latter of which was, unusually, coved (as was the sitting room ceiling at Seaton Cottage) and was painted with an intricate grid of flowers which gave the appearance of tiles. In a smaller sitting room painted Japanese fans illustrate the influence on Cottier of the Æsthetic designers and decorators such as Christopher Dresser, E. W. Godwin, William Burges and, of course James McNeill Whistler (pl. 40).

3.8 Jules Breton

Just as White and Reid managed to affect Macdonald's taste in interior design so too in his collecting their tastes were having an effect for in 1875, the same year that Cottier was transforming the interior of Kepplestone, Macdonald purchased a painting unlike anything else in his collection. That painting was *The Gleaner* by Jules Breton (1827-1905) (AAG pl. 41). Macdonald's painting was an earlier version of the larger picture which Breton was to exhibit at the Exposition Universelle in 1878 (Musée des Beaux Arts, Arras) but Macdonald's picture is in no way less powerful than the larger version. He does not idealise the peasant girl's strong features, dark sun-tanned skin and ragged clothes. Her feet are large, her ankles thick. Breton's vigorous brushwork - particularly on the corn heads and on the girl's sleeve - is quite unlike the tighter work found in the other paintings which Macdonald owned at the time. Breton's treatment of this figure is neither sentimental nor sexually provocative and thus quite at variance with Macdonald's paintings by Robert Herdman, William McTaggart, Edwin Long, Ernest Waterlow and even Jozef Israels. The gleaner looks forward at the viewer with an uncompromising, confident expression. It is her dignity which is the overriding quality conveyed (defined by one critic as *...une déesse déchue*)⁶⁹ - she is a monumental, powerful, ennobled peasant which Breton himself had described as;

*Ceres de la Gaule
Aux feux de Messidor
Comme les epis d'or*

⁶⁹ Librairie Illustrée, L'Art et Industrie à l'Exposition Universelle 1878 p 159 and quoted by McConkey Peasantries exhibition catalogue Newcastle 1981. p 23.

*Font bien sur ton épaule*⁷⁰

The work was an unlikely purchase for Macdonald, who almost invariably bought his paintings from the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition or from artist friends to whom he had been introduced by Reid and White. Jules Breton's work was not well known in Britain at this date. He never exhibited at the Royal Academy, nor at the Royal Scottish Academy. His work was not exhibited at The Glasgow Institute until 1882. Conversely, in Europe Breton was a highly regarded artist. He had been awarded the Légion d'Honneur in 1867 and he became a member of the Institut de France. Although an academic painter, whose visions of rural life were heroic rather than true to life, his paintings had been enormously influential on the younger Hague School artists - particularly those who had worked for extended periods in France, such as David Artz and Vincent van Gogh and perhaps also Jozef Israels.⁷¹

It is quite possible that the rustic subject of *The Gleaner* may have struck a chord with Macdonald. His home, Kepplestone, on the outskirts of the city, was surrounded by corn fields and, in Autumn, no doubt by gleaners. However his buying such a modern, realist work must have been due almost entirely to his friendship with White who, in his review of the Royal Academy two years earlier, had extolled Breton and had cited his *The Gleaners* (National Gallery, Dublin) when comparing a work by P.R. Morris unfavourably with it.⁷² George Reid was equally in admiration of Breton.⁷³ It is also possible that Daniel Cottier, who had been working at Kepplestone in 1875, may have suggested the acquisition to Macdonald. Equally likely is the possibility that John Forbes White persuaded his friend to buy the painting and brought it back from France, as he had brought back works by Mollinger and Bosboom for himself, thus adding yet another innovative, realist painting to a north-east collection.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ *Les Champs et la Mer* a verse by Breton quoted by Kenneth McConkey *op. cit.*

⁷¹ See *The Hague School - Dutch Masters of the 19th Century* text by Ronald de Leeuw Royal Academy, London 1983 pp 35, 140 & 150.

⁷² John Forbes White "The Royal Academy of 1873" *The Contemporary Review* 1873 p 280.

⁷³ George Reid to John Forbes White 9 May 1869 (see Appendix A).

⁷⁴ Breton is generally classed (along with Rosa Bonheur and Théodule Ribot) as one of the conservative school of official realists, sanctioned by Louis Napoleon in 1855 in opposition to the insurgent art of Courbet. Nevertheless the acquisition of this painting marked a noticeable and important change in Macdonald's collecting.

3.9 William Robertson Smith

Around 1st June 1871 George Reid met the theologian and semantic scholar William Robertson Smith (1846-1894) for the first time. Since 1870 Smith had held the chair of oriental languages and exegesis of The Old Testament in the Free Church College of Aberdeen. The two men had a mutual friend in Alexander Gibson, an Edinburgh advocate, and soon became firm friends.

In 1875 Smith had been appointed a member of the Old Testament Revision Committee, and wrote several entries on religious themes for The Encyclopaedia Britannica, including those for “angel” and “bible”. Various members of the Free Church regarded these articles with suspicion and a committee was appointed by the assembly of 1876 to investigate the articles.

Whilst the career of William Robertson Smith was fraught with such difficulties, Reid’s own career was taking a happier, though equally busy and frustrating, course throughout the 1870s. As his work became better known he received an increasing amount of portrait commissions. Conversely the change in his landscape style; that is his novel subject matter, his increasing emphasis on tonality over colour, and his use of pure rather than diluted oil paint, met with critical disdain, so that the balance of landscape and portraits within his *oeuvre* changed. By 1876 Reid was to complete three times as many portraits as landscapes, a situation he was increasingly to resent;

Portrait painting occasionally indulged in is to me a great luxury - become habitual - a great affliction - I feel that it is eating the life out of me - and sucking away some of the best feelings I have - it must and shall be got rid of at all costs...

but Reid, ever conscious of his financial responsibilities, continues;

but it must be done gradually. You know what I have upon my shoulders - well all that must be provided for - and there is no more ready way of doing so than by portrait painting. For that you have always an audience ready at your hand - for the other thing you have to make your audience - a slow and laborious process....⁷⁵

⁷⁵ George Reid to John Forbes White 7 August 1870.

Nevertheless Reid found the time to accompany Smith on a journey to Germany where Smith's two sisters were to go to a school in Frankfurt.⁷⁶ It is quite possible that Reid was encouraged to make the journey by White, whose inspirational schooling under Blackie would have included anecdotes about his years of study and travel through Germany. White also perhaps perceived the journey as an opportunity to break Reid away from the drudgery of portrait painting.

Their route took them from Bruges to Ghent, Antwerp, Aachen, Cologne, Coblenz, Boppard and on to Frankfurt where Smith's sisters were left as planned. The two men then continued on to Dresden, Wurzburg, Nuremberg, north to Erfurt, Göttingen and Munich. Each evening Reid would chronicle the day's events in sketches, with his friend helping with the accompanying text. The sheets were then sent, half a dozen at a time, to the lithographer in Aberdeen, a Mr Dakers. He transferred them to stone and produced 25-30 copies, the stones then being cleaned as Reid had directed. The intention was quite clearly to produce a small edition for the men's friends - in effect an extended postcard.

Reid's interests are apparent throughout - he is horrified by the ugly renovations of several ancient churches and charmed by the simpler aspects of the German architecture. They visit Albrecht Dürer's grave; which Reid sketches, as he does the view of Cologne Cathedral from across the Rhine. In Augsburg he admires the Roman remains, and in so doing takes the opportunity to criticise Alexander Macdonald's profession;

the Aberdeen granite polishers who are yearly making our churchyards more dismal with their hideous obelisks, broken columns and cippi, might learn amendment from the many beautiful sepulchral monuments which even late Roman art was able to produce, and that in a remote province.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Their father, William Pirie Smith, was the minister for the tiny parish of Keig and Teugh, near Alford. He taught a group of children there and his funding his daughters to study abroad was a remarkable example of his regard for equality in education. Pirie Smith was also largely responsible for the education of his son William, who has been described as "one of Britain's finest ever scholars" (Rogerson 1993) and "One of the greatest minds ever" (Harriet Lutzky) see William Robertson Smith - Essays in Reassessment Ed. by William Johnstone Sheffield Academic Press 1985 p16.

⁷⁷ George Reid and William Robertson Smith Notes and Sketches p 15.

Reid and Smith ended their journey at The Hague with a visit to Jozef Israels' studio, where their publication Notes and Sketches was finished off with Israels adding a profile sketch of his daughter Mathilde (who was then about 11 years old) to which Smith added an inscription (appropriately in Hebrew) paraphrased from Ecclesiastes Rabbah, which translates as; "Man dies with only half of what he wants accomplished" (pl. 42) a sentiment doubtless shared by all three prodigiously productive men.⁷⁸

The year after Smith and Reid returned, the Free Church Committee, which had met to investigate Smith's writings, produced a report which was so hostile that Smith was forced to demand a formal trial of "libel" (indictment) for his alleged heresies.⁷⁹ The nature of the offence was that William Robertson Smith had not interpreted the bible in a literal enough manner, something which had caused similar problems for White's teacher J.S. Blackie, when he took up his chair in Humanity at Marishal College, Aberdeen in 1839.⁸⁰ Blackie sympathised with Smith as did White; both men's liberal views allowing for Smith's doubts and personal interpretation of the bible. Reid, naturally more conservative, feared the consequences of such associations, writing to White, who was in Paris at the time;

I had a walk with W.R.S. yesterday afternoon - he begins to look worn and spiritless - this persecution is telling on him at last. Laidlaw Binnie and Iverach have forsaken him - the fear of man has proved a snare. Things really look worse for him than they have done - but you will hear all the outs and ins when you return -

This unspeakable "Liberal Association" has set the town by the ears and there is a wonderful amount of bad blood and bitterness between man and man as the first fruits of their labours. The more I see of this so-called "Liberalism" the less I like it. I wish you had nothing to do with it.⁸¹

It is at this time that the fundamental differences between Reid and White begin to become apparent. Just a short time before White had expressed his enormous pride

⁷⁸ See William Robertson Smith - Essays in Reassessment Ed. by William Johnstone Sheffield Academic Press 1985 p 21.

⁷⁹ Following a vote of no confidence Smith was finally removed from his chair in June 1881.

⁸⁰ At the time he had been required to sign the Confession of Faith, and had done so, but had then delivered a declaration to the effect that he did not regard it as a private confession of faith. Furthermore Blackie went on to publish his declaration in two newspapers. See Anna M. Stoddart John Stuart Blackie Edinburgh & London 1895 pp 177-189.

⁸¹ George Reid to John Forbes White 4 November 1877.

in, and paternalistic feelings for, Reid.⁸² White had sons of his own but his daughters were showing far more promise and Reid was, as he saw it, the son he did not have. Equally Reid's father had been a bankrupt, whose financial misfortunes had denied his son a proper education and left him with enormous familial responsibilities and an abiding fear of poverty.⁸³ White provided Reid with the financial and intellectual support he needed. He also gave him personal introductions and a rounded - indeed polymathic - education. In return Reid was fulfilling White's own dreams of following the artistic and intellectual career which White's duties forbade him from pursuing himself. The relationship was a symbiotic one. Yet the two men continued to have a completely different outlook on life. Six years later Reid was still expressing grave concerns about White's radicalism and association with disestablishers.⁸⁴ Given Blackie and White's admiration for German literature and philosophy it is hardly surprising that they sided with the German liberal theology which was to shatter the unity of the Scottish Presbyterians.⁸⁵ White's life up to this point had been one of relative privilege and tremendous cultural wealth. Having had Blackie as his mentor he came to see all cultural matters in a wider, European context. He saw his mission in life as being an artistic equivalent to that of John Cairns in religion. Through studying in Germany and applying in Scotland what he had learned there, Cairns had rescued his country from "the blindness of religious provincialism".⁸⁶ So White endeavoured to rid Scotland of an artistic xenophobia. Given this desire White felt at ease with the controversial views of William Robertson Smith whereas Reid believed that such associations might threaten his place in society - he worried about his own and White's involvement in Smith's problems and seemed concerned to establish a reputable position in Aberdeen society. Perhaps partly to cement his place in the cultured, middle classes to which he had now risen, on his return from Europe he negotiated the purchase of a small, double-fronted stone built house and set about turning it into his own artistic idyll. In the light of his clear differences of opinion with White at this time, it is perhaps ironic

⁸² John Forbes White to George Reid 27 January 1874 (see Appendix A).

⁸³ George Reid's two older brothers had died, leaving him with widows and nephews and nieces to provide for. He was also supporting his parents, sisters and younger brothers, Archy and Sam.

⁸⁴ George Reid to John Forbes White 15 October 1883 (See Appendix A).

⁸⁵ See William Ferguson *Scotland 1689 to the Present* Edinburgh 1968 (reprinted 1997) p 312.

⁸⁶ A.R. McEwan *Life and Letters of John Cairns* London 4th edition 1898 p 150.

that Reid should have chosen to follow White's lead in terms of the renovations of the house, which echoed those that Cottier had carried out at Seaton Cottage over ten years before.

CHAPTER 4

A New Genre for Scottish Art Societies & Associations 1876-1880

4.1 St Lukes

Kepplestone Cottage stood across a small lane from Alexander Macdonald's home, Kepplestone, on the western outskirts (and by then the best area) of Aberdeen. Reid purchased it for £850 from the widow of Professor Marcus Sacks and took possession on 4th June 1874.¹

The choice of a house so close to that of Macdonald can be partly explained by Reid's friendship with Macdonald. In spite of Reid's reservations about his artistic taste, he nevertheless regarded Macdonald as not only a patron but also a friend and someone to be guided and helped rather than despised. Nevertheless Reid had no intention of employing Macdonald's architect to extend and refurbish his new home. Nor did he turn to Dr William Kelly (1861-1944) as described by Brogdon² Instead he chose the Glasgow architect William Leiper, whom he had first met, in all probability, in Auchterarder when he was there painting members of the Mackintosh family in the early 1870s (See Chapter 2).

For two years Reid used the cottage much as White used Seaton Cottage - as a summer retreat. As White had employed Cottier to renovate and refurbish his modest home at Seaton, so Reid employed Leiper to extend and embellish the house and, moreover, to turn his small farm house into a fanciful Medieval-inspired *Arts and Crafts* house. As Cottier had done at Seaton Cottage, Leiper extended the front of the house, enlarging the main windows on the south elevation and he raised the roof, adding a second floor to the home. A large studio, embellished with a stair tower and musicians gallery, was added on the north side (pl. 43). In the windows of the corridor

¹ Reid borrowed £1000 from a local brewer, Basil John Fisher, in order to finance the purchase of the house - see Douglas Mitchell's unpublished notes on Sir George Reid, Gordon Highlanders Museum, Aberdeen.

² W.A. Brogdon *Aberdeen - An Illustrated Architectural Guide* Edinburgh 1986 p 120. Kelly was still a teenager at the time. John Donald (*The Granite City* Edinburgh 1988 p 152) states that Kelly worked on the house in 1880 and, although he was not responsible for the main renovations, Kelly may indeed have been commissioned by Reid to do further work at St Lukes in the 1880s.

leading to it Reid had inserted mediaeval German glass which he had, no doubt, collected on his recent travels. The house was whitewashed (thus obscuring all traces of the dreaded granite) and the decorative woodwork painted black. It was in complete contrast to Macdonald's home, which was also built on to and around a much earlier building, but was recognisably Scottish and much plainer in design.

By 16th April 1878 the Reid family moved into the property and on 16th May Reid used the studio for the first time (pls. 44 & 45).³ Reid could now accommodate his extended family; his mother, brothers and sisters. He could work from home, but still invite his patrons and sitters there without any sense of embarrassment. Reid renamed the house, appropriately, after the patron saint of artists, St Luke.

Having completed the work on the house, Reid could turn his attentions to the garden, a task that was aided by the fact that in 1882 he married a local woman, Mia Best, who loved gardening and flowers in particular.⁴ Visiting St Luke some years later, Hilda Gray, the daughter of William Quiller Orchardson, was struck by the haven Reid had succeeded in creating. She commented particularly on the sheltered position of the house, describing it as “a delightful little suntrap”.⁵ The garden was planted with the flowers that could be found in most Scottish gardens of the day including gowans, gladioli, Japanese anemones, Christmas Roses and nasturtiums. Climbing up the house, outside Reid's bedroom window, was the apricot-coloured climbing rose *Gloire de Dijon*.

In spite of numerous portrait commissions, throughout the second half of the 1870s, Reid found time to relax during the summer months at St Luke. Its garden provided him with a new artistic avenue as, with the garden now full of flowers, he chose to make them the subjects of his paintings. Flower painting was a class of art which was virtually unknown in Scotland before this date but, from 1876, Reid began to make flowers alone the subject of many paintings and, in so doing, became the first Scottish artist to pursue flower painting to any great degree. In fact, as will be shown, George Reid's flower paintings went on to be tremendously influential to many other

³ I am indebted to Douglas Mitchell for this information.

⁴ Hilda Gray The Life of Sir William Quiller Orchardson London 1930 p 228.

⁵ *Ibid.*

artists and he proved to be almost entirely responsible for introducing this subject into Scottish art (though, as ever, with more than a little help from John Forbes White).⁶

4.2 George Reid's Flower Paintings

In her biography of her father, Ina Mary identified what she believed to have been the inspiration for Reid's first venture into flower painting, that being a painting of roses by the Barbizon painter Narcisse de Virgil Diaz de la Peña (1807/8-1876) that White bought in 1875.⁷ The painting, apparently a flattened oval,⁸ she described as "a bouquet of glowing colour".⁹ As soon as the painting arrived in Aberdeen White wrote excitedly to Reid about it;

The Diaz is superb. Flowers were never painted better than by him. It is like the work of many of the great old fellows, fresh and juicy, strong yet delicate.¹⁰

Ina goes on to say how soon "one and all began to paint flowers and tried to catch the brilliant freshness." and that "George Reid succeeded in his luminous "Roses" painted at white heat in a few hours".¹¹

Reid did indeed go on to paint numerous paintings of roses, but Ina's somewhat simplistic account fails to clarify the fact that the influence of the Diaz on "one and all" came through Reid. She also neglects to state that, although a large

⁶ Pinnington mentions that Chalmers painted flower pieces but they appear to have been few in number. Like those of Reid they were inspired at least in part by the still life of roses that White owned by Diaz. See Edward Pinnington *George Paul Chalmers and the Art of His Time* Glasgow 1906 p 171.

⁷ White could not afford to pay Cottier the £347 required. Instead he swapped the Diaz for five works that he had bought recently, including paintings by Anton Mauve and Jacob Maris.

⁸ The painting is described as a flattened oval by Ina Mary Harrower but in Sir James L. Caw's privately printed catalogue of the collection of Andrew T. Reid of Auchterarder is reproduced (from a drawing of it by Alexander Roche) a portrait format, rectangular flower painting of roses, double poppies and cornflowers by Diaz, which is described as that owned by White. White himself wrote (in his hand-written record of his paintings) that he sold the painting to Reid in March 1892 for £700. He states the measurements as being virtually the same as the painting described by Caw but describes it as having been painted on panel (specifically an "old door") whereas Caw describes an oil painting on canvas.

⁹ Virgile Diaz de la Peña was born in Bordeaux in 1807 and died in 1876. His work was fêted from 1870 onwards, then about 1900 forgotten because of the advent of Impressionism. E.C. Bénézit found fit to devote four pages to Diaz, believing him to be a much undervalued artist, and outlining his fame at the end of the 19th century and also the enormous influence he was to have on the next generation of French artists including Fantin-Latour, Monticelli and even Cézanne, Degas and Renoir and his consequently very important place in the development of Modern Art.

¹⁰ John Forbes White to George Reid 30 December 1875.

proportion of Reid's flower still lifes were paintings of roses, they were not the first flowers he depicted.

White's painting by Diaz did indubitably have an enormous effect on Reid (particularly his adoption of vigorous and vital brushwork), but Reid himself had been making flowers and plants the subject of his paintings for several years before the arrival of the Diaz. This is clear as early as 1869, when Reid painted a double portrait of a Mrs Duguid and her son in their garden at Auchlunies in Kincardineshire (AAG pl. 46). Reid had painted the background *en plein air*, only finishing the work in his studio. The background of the painting - an espaliered apple tree in full fruit - looks very much like a Morris wallpaper, and has parallels with a painting by John Everett Millais, *Spring (Apple Blossoms)* of 1856-9 (Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight) in which fruit trees also act as a backdrop to the figure composition. However, whereas Millais shows the view through the trees - Reid cuts off the perspective and brings the two figures forward. This distinctly two-dimensional effect, probably influenced by Japanese woodcuts, was thoroughly modern and was not a distinctive feature of British art at the time. It was, however, beginning to appear in French painting, as in Edouard Manet's *The Balcony* of 1868 (Louvre, Paris) which Reid would have seen when it was exhibited at the Salon in 1869. Reid emphasised the importance he placed on the outdoor setting of the portrait by entitling it *In the Garden, Auchlunies* and exhibiting it as such at the Royal Scottish Academy in 1870.

Three years later Reid completed his most ambitious landscape to date; a painting fully inspired by his experience of Barbizon and Dutch landscape painting. The horizontal format of *Whins* (Private Collection), the emphasis on tonality rather than colour and the subordination of the human element in favour of a strong emphasis on the landscape and vegetation, all point to these influences. Yet it is a painting where both the subject and title reveal Reid's interest, not so much in landscape, as in flowers. The subject of this "landscape" is indeed the flowers rather than the land; flowers seen at their most natural, in the wild. *Whins* was a daring work and Reid was anxious that White might not want to buy it (he knew that none of his other patrons would). White's reply reveals his delight with the painting;

¹¹ Ina Mary Harrower John Forbes White Edinburgh 1918 p 38.

My dear Reid

It is not often that the purchaser is the man that fixes the price of the goods, but somehow I feel that I know all about "The Whins" or "The Gold of June" and that I *have a better notion of some things about it than even you* - the price cannot measure its excellence - it is only a tribute to its goodness - I enclose a cheque for £210. *I feel enormous pride in you.*¹²

Painted in 1873 it was to be one of at least five versions of the subject, which evidently fascinated Reid for some time. *Whins* was exhibited at the Royal Scottish Academy the following year and at The Royal Academy as *Gorse in Bloom* (the title anglicised for his English audience) in 1877, where it was hung on the line.¹³ That year Millais exhibited his anecdotal *A Yeoman of the Guard* (Tate Gallery) and *Yes* but also the landscape *The Sound of Many Waters*, an unpeopled landscape painted in soft, muted tonalities which had much in common with Reid's *Whins*. John Everett Millais' movement towards such empty, tonal landscapes may well have facilitated the acceptance of Reid's landscapes at The Royal Academy. In turn Reid's landscapes and those that had inspired him, were in all probability the impetus Millais needed to paint such works.

When Reid began to paint pure still lifes of flowers, however, his treatment - if not his initial inspiration - did indeed derive from French antecedents. Reid never painted fruit or other still life objects as Courbet had done. Nor did he mix different types of flower in the same composition as did Léon Bonvin, Philippe Rousseau or Edouard Manet. The subject of his paintings was always a single type of flower or plant.

Reid's still lifes were very similar to those of Henri Fantin Latour (1836-1904) who, thanks to his English promoters Mrs and Mrs Edwards, was exhibiting frequently in Britain. Fantin Latour had exhibited at the Royal Academy from 1862 and at the Glasgow Institute from 1875. It was only one year later that Reid was to paint his own first flower painting. His first still life proper, painted in 1876, was a study of Christmas Roses. The following year he painted *Daffodils*, which was bought by John Forbes White and in 1878 *Marsh Marigolds in A Blue Jar* (AAG pl. 47) which was

¹² John Forbes White to George Reid. Undated.

¹³ Col. W.H. Lumsden to George Reid 7 May 1877 (see Appendix A).

bought by Alexander Macdonald and exhibited at The Royal Scottish Academy the same year.

Reid's subjects followed very closely those of Fantin Latour. They included *May Blossom* 1876, *Roses* 1878, *Apple Blossom* 1878 and *Gladioli* in 1882. In 1880, for example, Fantin Latour exhibited *Double Nasturtiums* (Victoria & Albert Museum) at The Dudley Gallery.¹⁴ Two years earlier Reid had also painted nasturtiums and was to paint two more paintings of them in 1887. Until his own garden could supply him with flowers, Mrs White brought him flowers, collecting marsh marigolds from the banks of the River Don at Seaton;

My dear J.F.W.

I finished the marsh mallows about an hour ago. They were restless sitters. I had no idea they grew so fast and turned their heads so about after the light.

It was so exceedingly kind of Mrs White to take so much trouble gathering them & bringing them across. I fear I had not the presence of mind to thank her at the time for this. The blue jar paints beautifully.¹⁵

The following summer Mrs White again came with marsh marigolds, this time requesting that Reid make a study of them for their mutual friend, J. Irvine Smith.¹⁶ The marsh marigolds were followed by Indian cress (nasturtiums) and marguerites, white azaleas (painted from a pot plant, see pl. 45), apple blossom, daffodils, gowans, pink hawthorn, Japanese anemones, gladioli and sunflowers, the seed for which was provided by Mrs White. Reid had brought back from the convent of San Marco in Fiesole (which he visited in 1880), some wild irises and these became the subject of at least one painting.

The irises I stole from St Marks are well and alive and doing well but I hardly think they will flower this year¹⁷

¹⁴ See *The Athenaeum* 27 November 1880.

¹⁵ George Reid to John Forbes White 14 July 1878.

¹⁶ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 1 June 1879. James Irvine Smith was born in Aberdeen on 12 February 1830. He worked as a shorthand writer and law reporter in Edinburgh, where he lived at 20 Great King Street. He clearly had a great interest in the visual arts, being actively involved with the Society for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in Scotland. He also had a large collection of works by J.M.W. Turner. He did not marry and died 11 May 1908.

But they did flower;

One of the irises I brought from Florence has flowered magnificently. I intend painting it on Monday - It is just the thing for the Dante picture. It is like the one the little girl plucked for us that sunny afternoon as Fiesole.¹⁸

Only in 1879 did Reid attempt his first painting of roses, which was exhibited at the RSA that year and at the Glasgow Institute in 1881. It was bought by Lord McLaren, the Lord Advocate.

Reid's devotion to Realism meant that he did not favour grandly arranged flower studies. He not only adopted the same flowers as French artists but also painted these flowers in a similar manner. The casual treatment of flowers - painting them in disarray - is exemplified by Manet and probably has its roots in Chardin. It is certainly a French phenomenon. This French tradition of painting simple, uncluttered, seemingly spontaneous still lifes - often of wild or garden flowers plopped into a vase or thrown onto a surface - was taken on board by Reid in its totality. His flowers would be simply, or even casually and carelessly, arranged in order to give the impression of a moment in real time.

As with Reid's landscape paintings, such as *Whins*, in his still lifes there is a very strong emphasis on the horizontal. Often, as in *Rhododendrons* (AAG pl. 48) not all the stems would be in the vase - one or two flowers might have fallen on to the table. In this painting the rhododendrons are not in the first flush but are depicted as they really were, quite clearly wilting, indeed dying.¹⁹ Reid painted them as quickly as possible, but sometimes did replace one arrangement with another to counteract the drying out of the specimen.²⁰ In the case of *Pink Hawthorn* (Private Collection pl. 49) the branches have been laid down on a surface, as if freshly gathered and awaiting arrangement. In this painting the branches lie on what appears to be snow - an indistinctly painted white surface with daring blue shadows. To the left the branches are cut off, a stylistic device that indicates Reid's awareness of Japanese art which was having such a marked effect on French art at this time.

¹⁷ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 13 June 1880.

¹⁸ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 10 July 1880.

¹⁹ George Reid to Mia Reid 13 July 1887 (see Appendix A).

²⁰ George Reid to Mia Reid 15 July 1887 (see Appendix A).

Like Fantin Latour and Diaz before him and Stuart Park and Peploe after, Reid came to concentrate on painting roses. The fact that Reid painted a disproportionate amount of still lifes of roses may be as much to do with his admiration for Fantin Latour as for Diaz (of the over fifty still lifes of flowers which Fantin Latour exhibited at the Royal Academy between 1862 and 1900 roses outnumber any other flower). Equally it could simply have been that he, like most other artists and flower growers, admired the form and intrinsic beauty of the rose. Yet, like rhododendrons, roses did not last well and caused him problems;

I hope to do you some roses next year - but I fancy they will have to be Kepplestone - not "frish" roses - they won't keep after they are cut and require to be set about at once. By the second day their glory has begun to pass away - "Change and decay in all around I see"! is the suitable motto for the second day at a rose picture."²¹

Yet, in paintings such as *Roses* (AAG pl. 50) Reid made great play of the dying quality of the roses and did not shirk away from this facet of their beauty and the symbolism of the transiency of life that such a flower piece could convey.

As Fantin Latour's paintings had proved to be a huge commercial success in Britain, so too Reid's flower pieces were soon in great demand. He had no difficulty in selling the paintings. Rather he found that he could not keep up with demand and, whilst he found the flower pieces light relief from the tedium of painting numerous commissioned portraits,²² he soon had to limit their production as they were holding up his portraiture which he was committed to continue, both because of financial necessity and, perhaps ironically, success.²³

The background in Reid's flower paintings remains severely simple - almost always an unidentifiable brown, fading from dark at the top and filtering to a lighter shade towards the lower edge. Reid was using a similar brown background for his portraits, which served in both cases to heighten the impact of the subject. The inspiration for such severity seems likely to have derived from Rembrandt but in modern-day France Manet and Fantin-Latour were also using similar backgrounds,

²¹ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 27 August 1880.

²² In much the same way as Millais painted his Perthshire landscapes.

²³ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 14 August 1884 (see Appendix A).

both for portraits and still lifes, and Reid's intimate knowledge of both artists' work might also have had an effect. Clearly Reid was willing to take advice from White;

The Roses have turned up, all safe, You are right about the background - it is too dark, and too hot in colour. I will change it. I hope you won't think the worse of the picture if the R.A. use it - it is just possible.²⁴

Both with his portraits and his flower pieces Reid preferred strong and dramatic lighting, focusing on the subject of the work and leaving much of the background in apparent darkness. Once again Reid's great admiration for Rembrandt may well have inclined him towards such dramatic lighting. Whatever the original source, the combination of dark backgrounds and dramatic lighting were to be adopted by some of Reid's contemporaries²⁵ and by many of the next generation of Scottish artists, some of whom were twenty years his junior.

4.3 The Influence of George Reid's Flower Paintings on the "Glasgow Boys"

It has proved convenient for many authors to credit to the so-called "Glasgow Boys" the introduction of flower painting into Scotland. Writers argue that these men – Arthur Melville, J. Stuart Park and several others introduced the *genre* because of their training in France or even – almost on a whim – because of their own inspired ideas.²⁶ In fact the inspiration for such paintings was on view, in Scotland, long before these men first ventured abroad and Reid's influence on them cannot be underestimated. Of them J. Stuart Park (1862-1933) was the most greatly influenced. Born in Kidderminster of an Ayrshire family, Park took up painting professionally in 1888. He trained in Paris under Lefevre and Boulanger but he could have seen Reid's paintings before that, in a variety of places in Scotland. More importantly John Forbes White was forging close links with these artists, some of whom had visited him in Aberdeen early on in their careers. In Aberdeen these young artists could see Reid's painting *Whins* and other flower studies by him in the homes of White, Alexander

²⁴ George Reid to John Forbes White 18 March 1881.

²⁵ Including his two younger brothers, Archy and Sam, who both exhibited flower paintings in Aberdeen in 1881 and with the Aberdeen Artists' Society in 1885.

²⁶ See, for example, Roger Billcliffe The Glasgow Boys London 1985 p 268.

Macdonald and numerous other collectors. George Reid sent his flower paintings to the Royal Glasgow Institute from 1881, where J. Stuart Park would no doubt have seen them.

Up until 1887 Park had exhibited genre subjects at the Royal Glasgow Institute but from this date onwards he began to exhibit almost exclusively flower pieces. Of these the vast majority were paintings of roses, which were subsequently to become his speciality. Park's other flower paintings are, both in subject and treatment, unerringly like Reid's - daffodils, rhododendrons and azaleas painted in a daring and vigorous way and set against plain, usually dark backgrounds. Park's treatment of his favourite subject is also very similar to Reid's; a horizontal format with the petals of his roses falling, and often the flowers strewn across a surface, rather than arranged in a vase (compare, for example, Reid's *Roses* of 1884, pl. 50 with Park's *Roses* of c.1891 pl. 51). Had he not been aware of Reid's work Park might well not have taken up flower paintings, particularly the slick and repetitious still lifes - so often of roses - which were soon to become his mainstay.

In 1878 Arthur Melville (1858-1904), who was admired and assisted by both George Reid and John Forbes White (and, as Macmillan has pointed out, was hardly a "Glasgow Boy")²⁷ went to live in Paris. Billcliffe's assumption that he had "no doubt found Edinburgh restricting"²⁸ seems unlikely in view of the fact that he was selling his work and exhibiting at the Royal Scottish Academy. For a young artist moving in such circles, going to Paris - as Reid had done twenty years earlier - would have seemed a natural course of action. (A little later J. D. Fergusson wrote "to go to Paris was the natural thing for the Scot. It is not as the modern Scot or the Teutonic Scot seem to think, a new idea".²⁹) Before he went, however, like Park, Melville's work had already developed along remarkably similar lines to that of Reid's, particularly in the case of his flower paintings. The same year that Reid executed an oil painting of apple blossom, for example, so too did Melville. Melville's painting, (Private Collection), although executed in watercolour, is in all other respects - subject, composition, background and lighting - very similar to Reid's flower pieces.

²⁷ Duncan Macmillan *Scottish Art 1460-1990* Mainstream 1990 p 14.

²⁸ Roger Billcliffe *The Glasgow Boys* London 1985 p 25.

²⁹ J.D. Fergusson *Modern Scottish Painting* Glasgow 1943 p 69.

Another flower piece by Melville, a large and dramatic oil of 1885, *Scarlet Poppies* (Private Collection) also recalls Reid's daring still lifes. Only one type of garden-grown flower is depicted, the flowers are dramatically lit and they are placed before a dark, plain background. Melville also adopts a strongly horizontal format. No vase is evident and the flowers are seen strewn across a surface and are, quite clearly, dying. Ian Gale writes of this painting "the question is why did he paint it? The answer can only lie with Manet, Whistler and Velasquez".³⁰ It is clear from his work that, like Reid, Melville did indeed know and admire the work of these three masters. It is also quite possible, however, that he was also influenced by the slightly earlier flower paintings of George Reid, which he certainly knew and which bear such a striking resemblance to his own still lifes of flowers. Aberdeen's influence on the young Melville was not, perhaps, only restricted to flower paintings - one year after Archy Reid exhibited his study of a girl mending nets, *On the Sands* at the Royal Scottish Academy, Arthur Melville painted a watercolour entitled *The Net Mender* (untraced).

Reid painted still lifes of daffodils twice, in 1877 and 1879. John Lavery tackled the same subject in 1886. A still life of flowers by another "Glasgow Boy" - James Pittendrigh Macgillivray (who was born in Port Elphinstone, some twenty miles from Aberdeen and trained in Edinburgh) reveals an even clearer link with Reid's still life paintings. Indeed his *Rhododendrons* (GMAG pl. 52) seems to pay direct homage to the older man's work.

4.4 A Tradition Established

This tradition, established by Reid and continued by Park, Melville and Macgillivray led to the Scottish Colourists taking up still life painting, a fact which has hitherto been attributed entirely to their French contacts. In the case of Peploe at least, there was a direct link with Reid. Peploe's closest friend in his student days was the Aberdeen artist Robert Brough (1872-1905). Brough had been brought up next door to St Lukes where his talent had brought him to the attention of Reid. The illegitimate son of a housemaid, Brough was encouraged to develop his tremendous artistic talent by Reid, whose protégé he was. In his very short life, he established a remarkable

³⁰ Ian Gale Arthur Melville Edinburgh 1996 p 43.

reputation as a portraitist. Working very much in the style of his friend John Singer Sargent his art was nevertheless based - as was Reid's - on European precedents, particularly on the portraits of Velasquez. Brough honed his talents under the tutelage of Reid - painting for example a smaller copy of Reid's portrait of Provost Peter Esslemont (both AAG) for the family of the sitter. In their student days the work of Peploe and Brough was so similar as to be virtually indistinguishable. It was only later, after Brough's death, that the influence of Cézanne and Matisse and other French Post-Impressionists came to dominate Peploe's style. As with the "Glasgow Boys", The Scottish Colourists could see ample examples of modern still life paintings in Scotland before they ever went to France. Peploe could have seen, for example, White's Diaz when it was lent to the Royal Scottish Academy in 1892 (he and Brough were students in Edinburgh at the time). There can be little doubt that Reid's numerous flower pieces were an influence on Peploe long before he first went with Brough to France in the summer of 1894.

In eighteen years George Reid painted fifty-three flower pieces. Of these, twenty-one were of roses. He was the first Scottish artist to make flower studies his subject. By 1894 when his responsibilities in Edinburgh became so burdensome that he was forced to abandon his still life painting, the subject had become one of the most popular amongst Scottish artists. Without George Reid to set the precedent and provide an example to younger artists before they travelled to Europe, it seems unlikely that the subject would have taken a hold on so many of them as it did. Certainly in European terms, Reid was not unique. By the 1890s the subject and a particular interpretation of it had taken hold across Europe. In the paintings of André Perrachon (1827-1909), roses are strewn out of a vase. The Belgian artist Frans Mortelmans (1865-c1936) painted *Yellow Roses* (Christies 21 November 1997) with a dark background and a strong horizontal emphasis to the composition, in a very similar manner to Reid's *Rhododendrons*. Similarly J. Fritz Marshall (1859-1932) and James Valentine Jelley (fl. 1885-1942) painted still lifes of roses throughout the 1890s, but this was fifteen years after Reid first ventured into the subject.

In England there was certainly an unbroken tradition of painting flowers. John Sherrin (1819-1896) and William Henry Hunt (1790-1864), amongst others, had laid

the groundwork for late 19th century artists but in Scotland there was no such tradition. By the end of the century, however, numerous artists were painting flowers, indeed specialising in the subject in both countries - notably Madelaine Lemaire (1845-1928) Henry Scott Tuke (1858-1929), Gerard Chowne (1875-1917) and in Scotland, J. Stuart Park and latterly Katherine Cameron (1874-1965).³¹ Yet art critics have been completely remiss in acknowledging Reid's contribution to the history of flower painting in Britain. T. Martin Wood, writing in 1906, for example, though concentrating on English artists, nevertheless includes Park in his discussion.³² G. Baldwin Brown when looking at the flower pieces of Park and Millie Dow (who did not settle in Glasgow until 1890) does not refer to Reid as an influence on their work.³³ In his discussion of flower painting in Scotland Caw devotes a page to examining the paintings of Park which, with a few exceptions, he dislikes, but only a line to what he describes as "the virile and beautiful flower painting of Sir George Reid".³⁴ He fails to make a link between the two. Irwin & Irwin admit grudgingly and incorrectly to Reid having painted "a few flower-pieces inspired by a flower painting by Diaz bought by John Forbes White".³⁵ Such simplistic accounts - which diminish the importance of the over fifty paintings in question - have gone a long way to enforcing the belief that flower painting was, in essence, a phenomenon which the various "Glasgow Boys" introduced into Scotland through their direct links with French art. No writer acknowledges the debt owed by younger artists - MacGillivray, Park, Melville and Peploe - to Reid, nor dates the phenomenon to its correct inception that was in fact the early 1870s.

Through Melville, Park and their contemporaries a tradition of painting flower pieces was established in Scotland, a tradition which began, not with the so-called Glasgow Boys, but with George Reid, who had trained in Paris twenty years before the young "Glasgow" men.

³¹ T. Martin Wood "Modern Flower Painting and its Character" The Studio XXXVII No 157 April 1906 pp 191-203.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Brown The Glasgow School of Painters Glasgow 1907 pp 38-9.

³⁴ James Caw Scottish Painting Past and Present 1620-1908 London 1908 p 450.

³⁵ David & Francina Irwin Scottish Painters at Home and Abroad Faber & Faber 1975 p 351.

In both their treatment and style all these artists owed a debt - as did Reid - to Fantin Latour who, between 1875 and the end of the century, had exhibited some twenty-five flower pieces at the Glasgow Institute and yet more south of the border. However the contribution of George Reid to this tradition, which was so firmly established in Scotland by 1880 and which was to remain an important part of Scotland's artistic output for the next seventy years or so, should not be forgotten. The assumption that the "Glasgow Boys" introduced flower painting into Scotland is incorrect. Whether Reid's influence was subliminal or consciously received by younger artists is not clear. It is perhaps, understandable that they did not wish later to acknowledge their debt to Reid - who soon came to be regarded as the bastion of artistic society. That their biographers chose not to acknowledge it, however, is less justifiable. This was, perhaps, because they were intent on denying any credit to older Scottish artists (particularly anyone associated with Edinburgh or the Royal Scottish Academy). The debt, nevertheless, is indubitable and worthy of acknowledgement.

4.5 John Forbes White and Dundee

As the 1870s drew to a close both White and Reid seemed firmly established in their chosen careers. With so many artists now changing course and following the artistic principles that they had been advocating, it seemed that there was a real possibility of changing the Scottish art establishment and the public's appreciation of art. However personal tragedy and bad feeling came to change the course of artistic progress and, whilst the advocated changes did indeed take place, the credit for them was ultimately to be taken away from those who should have been credited, George Reid and, more importantly, John Forbes White.

1877 heralded an important new departure for John Forbes White. At the beginning of that year he opened new business premises in Dundee. The previous year a large, four-storeyed mill, wheat silos, a warehouse and offices had been built on the lower part of a piece of land that White had bought from the late Dr. J. Boyd Baxter. On 9th January White gave a dinner to celebrate the opening of the Dundee operations and invited businessmen, but also his artist friends, including George Paul Chalmers.³⁶

³⁶ Edward Pinnington George Paul Chalmers and the Art of His Time Glasgow 1906 p 235.

Since Napoleonic times, when his father had made large profits for the business, the flour industry in Scotland had contracted, and White realised that, with its more central location and better porting facilities, Dundee would be a better base for his business than Aberdeen. This move for the business would, however, also inevitably necessitate his moving there too. Behind the grand premises of the Dundee Flour Mills and fronted by south-facing gardens lay his own Dundee home, Craigtay. Once more Daniel Cottier was employed to work on John Forbes White's home.³⁷ White also commissioned Cottier to design a fanciful façade for the mill buildings, which looked out to the River Tay.³⁸ Appropriately for these waterfront buildings, Cottier worked in the Venetian style. Drawings for a building, with a rusticated Italian Renaissance façade, were drawn up by Cottier in 1875.³⁹ Form bore no relation to function and many of the windows were useless, hiding as they did the vast grain silos inside.

White's contacts with Dundee went back to the previous decade. He had given £50 (one of the more substantial donations) towards the costs of the British Association Exhibition in Dundee in 1867 and he was able to assimilate into that city's artistic world with relative ease. In spite of the move to Dundee, however, White retained close links with Aberdeen and continued to promote the art of his protégé George Reid, lending *Broadsea, near Fraserburgh* (untraced) to the Paris Exposition in 1878, where it was included in the British Fine Art Section. Clearly Reid's talents were gradually becoming better known; his bleak, severely realist style becoming accepted by both his Scottish contemporaries and the British artistic establishment.

4.6 Paul Falconer Poole

The previous year White had, unusually, purchased a painting from the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition. This was *The Dragon's Cavern* by Paul Falconer Poole RA (1807-1879) (AAG pl. 53). The subtitle of the painting "*Yawns wide within that*

³⁷ The mills were demolished some time later but Craigtay still exists. Though extensively altered, it is now run as a hotel and retains its original name. For further reading see A.H. Miller Glimpses of Old and New Dundee 1925 pp 154-156.

³⁸ Obituary of John Forbes White The Dundee Advertiser 15 October 1904.

³⁹ National Monuments Record ref AND 315. Small extensions to the original building were added in 1877 (ref AND 431) and 1888 (ref AND 335), both of which were carried out by local engineers Robertson & Orchar.

holy steep A mighty cavern dark and deep By blessed sunbeam never lit" - a quote from Schiller - may have recalled for White his early education under J. S. Blackie. Blackie's interest in and admiration for the German poet had been developed when studying in Germany as a young man (though may have had its roots in the writings of Thomas Carlyle, who was the first in Scotland to popularise such German writers). As with Corot's *Pastorale - Souvenir d'Italie* White was, on this occasion, prepared to forego his preference for pictures that depicted the present and real world. Instead (ignoring Ruskin's dictum that "what is good is beautiful") he purchased this imagined scene, which was described in the Royal Academy notes that year as "a weird and poetical landscape with gloomy valleys and stricken trees".⁴⁰ His antipathy to the Royal Academy did not prevent him from buying a painting by one of its more elderly members when, as here, he could admire its painterly qualities; the dramatic lighting, rich and freely applied paint and ill defined edges. White judged each work on its individual merits and on the talents of the artist, rather than on his reputation, fame or popularity. Indeed so in admiration of Poole was White that he wrote the entry on him for the 9th Edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, as he was to do for Velasquez and Rembrandt.

White had remarked upon Poole's talents four years earlier, praising his "rich harmonies of yellow, brown and blue [which] remind one of Poussin or Tintoretto".⁴¹ Perhaps with this comparison in mind, towards the end of the year White travelled to Italy and in Venice took the opportunity to admire the work of Tintoretto. He wrote to Reid of his admiration for Tintoretto's work and, in Reid's reply, White's superior knowledge of art and his opportunities to study become clear, as do Reid's frustrations regarding his own pressure of work and consequent difficulty in travelling;

I am sorry I have seen next to nothing of Tintoretto's work and cannot throw up my cap for him too - along with you. but perhaps some day - when the millstone is taken from my neck I may be able to go to Venice and see - I have no doubt you are right.⁴²

⁴⁰ *Academy Notes 1877* Ed. Henry Blackburn, London 1877 p 22.

⁴¹ John Forbes White "The Royal Academy of 1873" *The Contemporary Review* 1873 p 293.

⁴² George Reid to John Forbes White 4 November 1877.

4.7 The Death of George Paul Chalmers

Throughout 1877 Reid referred frequently to his worries about George Paul Chalmers, whose behaviour was increasingly erratic and unpredictable. At times he seemed to want to work hard and behave normally. At other times he seemed unbalanced and even to be suffering from delusions.⁴³ On the evening of the 15th February 1878 the annual dinner of the Royal Scottish Academy was held. Following the dinner White, Chalmers and their mutual friends gathered at the Artists Club where they discussed the hang. Chalmers was on the Hanging Committee that year and it had been at his insistence that White's large painting by Corot, *Pastorale - Souvenir d'Italie* had been included.⁴⁴ The friends discussed and praised the painting and also particularly J.M.W. Turner's *Lucerne*.⁴⁵ John Forbes White later recalled of the evening how Chalmers had expressed his belief that White's Corot had not received the praise it deserved.⁴⁶ Chalmers, it seems, regarded its presence to be of vital importance. The painting, as has been seen, had indeed proved to be an important influence on Robert Macaulay Stevenson and other younger artists - and no one more so than George Paul Chalmers. This evening was to be cited later as the zenith of this close group of friends; the last time that they would gather together - as they had so many times in the past in Old Deer, Aberdeen and Edinburgh - to share their thoughts on artistic matters. The following day George Paul Chalmers was found lying in the Infirmary, fatally injured. He died soon afterwards.

Both Reid and White were understandably shocked and distressed by the death of Chalmers. Together with Alexander Gibson⁴⁷ and J. Irvine Smith, they began working on a book which would, it was hoped, immortalise Chalmers' life and work. In 1879 the book was published. It was to be illustrated by George Reid, who planned to send his drawings to his favourite engraver, Paul Rajon.⁴⁸ For the frontispiece Reid

⁴³ George Reid to John Forbes White 4 November 1877.

⁴⁴ John Forbes White *G. Paul Chalmers* Edinburgh 1879 p 39.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* p 47.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p 39.

⁴⁷ Alexander Gibson was born on 6 November 1843. He was the only son of the writer David Gibson, of Kirkcaldy and was educated at Edinburgh University. As well as being a practicing Edinburgh advocate Gibson was also Secretary of the Educational Endowments Commission. He died in 1884.

⁴⁸ Paul Rajon (1843-1888), a French etcher, found fame by reproducing Gérôme's *Rembrandt dans son atelier*. He was a close friend of Daubigny.

worked from a small, posthumous oil sketch of the head of Chalmers (AAG pl. 54). It was the first work Reid finished in his new studio at St Lukes in Aberdeen and this fact he found particularly poignant.⁴⁹ Dissatisfied with the small sketch, Reid began to repaint an earlier portrait of Chalmers, which dated from 1872 (AAG pl. 54a). His excitement in working on the earlier painting is obvious,⁵⁰ his fervour perhaps an indication of how, in some strange way, his recreating the features of Chalmers might somehow bring back his dead friend. Whatever his motives, he preferred the earlier painting and planned to send it on too to Paul Rajon, so that he could work from both portraits. Comparing the two portraits of Chalmers however, with the finished frontispiece (pl. 55) it is clear that Reid used neither portrait on which to base his illustration, using instead a completely different pose for the finished drawing. That this pose was based on a photograph of Chalmers, rather than either oil painting, is made clear by Reid himself;

I have corrected both proofs from memory as I have nothing beside me for reference - having sent the photograph from which the drawing was made - to Rajon.⁵¹

This is the earliest reference in Reid's papers to his use of photography but photography, though rarely alluded to, was indeed often called upon for his portrait work over the ensuing years. This fact is hardly surprising - since Reid's mentor White was himself a pioneer photographer. Many of Reid's contemporaries used photography but equally they were usually reluctant to admit to having done so.⁵² Indeed Reid himself once refused to take on a portrait commission when it meant working entirely from a photograph.⁵³

Reid also drew for the book a small sketch of Chalmers' home town, Montrose. In it Montrose is depicted in its flattest prospect, with the Esk estuary filling the

⁴⁹ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 10 June 1878 (see Appendix A).

⁵⁰ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 15 June 1878. (see Appendix A).

⁵¹ George Reid to John Irvine Smith not dated but certainly 1879.

⁵² John Lavery was the exception. He was apprenticed to J.B. McNair, a Glasgow photographer for three years and freely admitted to the use of photography in his work (see John Lavery *The Life of a Painter* London 1940 p 42).

⁵³ George Reid to John Forbes White 23 March 1885 (see Appendix A).

foreground and only the silhouette of the town visible on the skyline. Reid's preference for such views did not always meet with the approval of his friends;

What do they mean by saying that there is little of the kind of landscape you care to paint near Fyvie?" wrote Reid's friend Lumsden dissaprovingly,"- What ailed you at the Braes of Licht and the whole course of the Ythan - one of the bonniest streams in Scotland....? But I know you!! You like great flats and vast air spaces.⁵⁴

In this drawing Montrose is seen to be a bleak and dismal place, bereft of the children which would later enliven Reid's oil painting of the same subject, painted ten years later (pl. 13).

Reid broke a long-standing tradition that year by not attending the annual dinner of The Old Deer Society. He found the absence of Chalmers there too upsetting to deal with⁵⁵ and in all his work for the book Reid's despondency over the untimely death of his friend and much admired contemporary is obvious. He made several sketches of the interior of Chalmers' studio whilst it remained untouched. These poignant scenes - with piles of canvases stacked against bare walls - served to illustrate Chalmers' achievements, both his work which was completed but remained unsold and the work he might still have done had he lived. Reid, who perhaps felt guilty at his ultimate inability to prevent Chalmers' death, also created three macabre studies of a skeletal hand holding a palette. He intended that at least one of them should also be engraved for the book, but John Irvine Smith and Alexander Gibson had reservations about the images.⁵⁶ Evidently they overcame them, however, and one of the images was included as the endpage (AAG pl. 56).

The book was a collaborative effort. Alexander Gibson, an Edinburgh advocate and friend of Chalmers, wrote the first part of the text; a biography of Chalmers. This was followed by a critical analysis of Chalmers' work, written by John Forbes White. As always, White's critique is clearly and concisely written. In it he traces the development of Chalmers' art; from Wilkiesque narrative painting to Rembrandtesque interiors. He emphasises the unity of tone and harmony of colour, and sums up Chalmers' art by describing how he, though undoubtedly influenced by the Great

⁵⁴ Col. W.H. Lumsden to George Reid 24 November 1877.

⁵⁵ Col. W.H. Lumsden to George Reid 28 November 1879.

Masters, never followed them slavishly, but always produced work that was “fresh and original and full of personal motive”. White praises the “native strength that makes his art his own” and concludes by stating that “to give his own interpretation of the relations of colour, light and shade, was the aim of his life.”⁵⁷

White describes Chalmers as admiring Rembrandt and Velasquez most highly - as he did himself.⁵⁸ He goes on to praise *The Legend* (National Gallery of Scotland), seeing in it similarities to the work of Rembrandt.⁵⁹ He reserves particular praise for Chalmers' painting *The Staircase Links House, Montrose* (untraced) which he owned, as being a particularly good example of the artist's treatment of light and colour. White's appreciation of the painting is typically modern;

Unfinished you may call this great sketch if you will, and void of detail, but the artist's idea is completely rendered; he had realised his *impression* of the moment, and of the place, and his work is done.⁶⁰

White's abhorrence of too much detail and indiscriminate use of colour is clearly illustrated. He admires the free, impressionistic technique adopted by Chalmers, comparing him in this aspect of his work, to the artist whom Chalmers' had himself praised on the night of his death;

...observe also how simply Chalmers gives the reflected light on the walls by a simple dash of yellow over the greenish-grey background, and you will be reminded of passages in Turner's "Death of Nelson".⁶¹

For White this was true artistic skill; skill which involved creating an effective image using a minimum of brush strokes. White also admired Chalmers' depiction of the real world, declaring that "the painter should paint what he sees, not what he knows".⁶² White extols the apparent freshness and spontaneity of Chalmers' work and the freedom of his brushstroke. Evidently Chalmers had been fully in agreement with his mentor for, White tells us, "minute detail violated the first condition of truth for

⁵⁶ George Reid to John Irvine Smith 27 January 1879 (see Appendix A).

⁵⁷ John Forbes White *G. Paul Chalmers* Edinburgh 1879 p 44.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* p 48-9.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p 49-50.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* p 49.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* p 52.

⁶² White quoting Chalmers, *Ibid.* p 55.

Chalmers".⁶³ In describing Chalmers' art White characterises his own criteria for good art, reaffirming the qualities which he had identified as early as 1868 in the *Veri Vindex* article and was to reiterate in his epistle to Corot's *Souvenir Pastorale* some ten years later; declaring that

Precision or finical minuteness he purposely avoided, as being pictorially false,Nature, whether in portraiture or landscape, always appeared to him broad and simple, a whole made up of many parts and under different influences of light and shade, welded together so as to form one harmonious completeness.⁶⁴

White sees the moment captured in Chalmers' landscapes;

They are seldom if ever direct transcripts from nature; they convey rather the impressions produced on him, and thus, as may be expected, they bare distinct traces of his personality. An effect, more or less momentary, strikes him; it passes through the alembic of his mind, becomes part of himself, and that is what he paints.⁶⁵

White also remarks on the influence of Corot on Chalmers;

The joyousness of a summer morning he would represent with the silvery tones of Corot (as in the little picture No. 53 of the Glasgow Loan Exhibition, 1878) where the dew on the birch seems to sparkle, and the air feels fresh.⁶⁶

Clearly, by 1878, White had firmly established the qualities that were necessary for the creation of good art and those qualities were exemplified, he believed, in the art of George Paul Chalmers. Chalmers had promoted their ideas and tastes through his own work and also his selection and hanging of pictures at the Royal Scottish Academy. White recalls Chalmers' last evening and quotes him, praising certain paintings that were hanging at the Royal Scottish Academy that year. In so doing White uses Chalmers to express the shared thoughts of himself and Chalmers.

Pinnington rightly states that Chalmers was always more in tune with Israels and Corot than with any of his contemporaries⁶⁷ He admired most of all Rembrandt, Velasquez, Millet, Turner and Corot and "often went down on his knees in dreamy

⁶³ *Ibid.* p 55.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* p 56.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* p 63.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* pp 63-4.

⁶⁷ Edward Pinnington *George Paul Chalmers and the Art of His Time* Glasgow 1906 p 202.

admiration" of White's Diaz.⁶⁸ There can be no doubt that White and Chalmers held shared views on art. White's collection of paintings, which Chalmers held in such awe, and almost certainly White's beliefs in art, were of fundamental importance to this artist who was two years his junior and whom he had sponsored and supported since the beginning of his career. Like Reid, under White's patronage Chalmers moved away from anecdotal, interiors to a broader treatment, to a more impressionistic interpretation of landscape and to a freer handling of paint. His admiration for particular artists is so like that of White that it does suggest that the influence was not a chance thing and that White had a major effect on Chalmers' change of style and treatment. Nor is it impossible that this influence in turn affected the art of Chalmers' closest friend, William McTaggart, whose work came to show a marked debt to Hague School artists, particularly Jozef Israels.⁶⁹ McTaggart's acquaintance with the Aberdeen group - whose admiration for spontaneity and capturing the "*impression of the moment*"⁷⁰ may well have changed his ideas on art. McTaggart's unique painting style and his own, now famous claim, to have been painting impressionism before he ever saw Impressionist art,⁷¹ may well have their roots in his Aberdeen connections. The premise that McTaggart did indeed admire the art of the Hague School artists is further indicated by the fact that in 1882 he visited Jozef Israels in the company of Orchar.⁷²

It is clear that Chalmers and John Forbes White were perhaps even more in tune artistically than White and Reid and, in expressing Chalmers' tastes and thoughts, White was, in effect, expressing his own. In conclusion through his eulogy to Chalmers, White expresses his own artistic beliefs but, by describing them as Chalmers' beliefs, does so in the way he found most congenial; anonymously.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* p 193.

⁶⁹ This debt was denied by Caw (*Scottish Painters at Home and Abroad* p 253) and by Hardie (*Scottish Painting* p 74) and only hinted at, but not accepted, by Errington (*William McTaggart 1835-1910* Edinburgh 1989 pp 66-7).

⁷⁰ John Forbes White *G. Paul Chalmers* Edinburgh 1879 p 49.

⁷¹ Lindsay Errington *op. cit.* p 100.

⁷² The visit was indeed with Orchar, see Hardie *op. cit.* p 74 & Caw (*William MacTaggart* p 84) not with White as stated by Macmillan (*Scottish Art 1460-1990* Mainstream 1990 p 244).

Since Pinnington first made the error of referring to “Mr Gibson’s critical dictum”⁷³ when in fact citing White’s excellent appraisal of Chalmers’ work, the book has ever since been wrongly attributed to Gibson. White’s anonymous writings - such as the pamphlet by “*Veri Vindex*” have perhaps understandably lost their significance in the annals of Scottish art history. His work on Chalmers - which is as much a glorious celebration of modern art as a paeonic epitaph to Chalmers, should never have suffered the same fate.

4. 8 George Reid in Edinburgh - The Royal Scottish Academy and The Royal Association for the Promotion of the Fine Arts In Scotland

Only six years after the Royal Scottish Academy exhibition that had prompted White and Reid to write the pamphlet by “*Veri Vindex*” the Academy exhibition of 1879 clearly looked very different. The hanging committee and Council, which included the President Sir Daniel MacNee, the Secretary William Brodie and the Treasurer Charles Lees, had hung Reid’s portrait of John Forbes White in a good position. A memorial hang for Chalmers had been arranged and Reid describes how *The Legend* was looking “splendid - and the other bits also very beautiful”.⁷⁴ Increasingly Reid was playing a part in the Academy and was determined to raise the profile of the artists whom he admired. In the New Year of 1879 James Cassie was up for election - he was unwell and was to die only four months later. “I intend coming up about the 8th” wrote Reid “There is an election (2 RSAs) on the 10th and I would like to do what I can for Cassie.”⁷⁵ In spite of the fact that Cassie’s colourful and minutely detailed work was now somewhat old fashioned, Reid could nevertheless admire the intrinsic quality of his paintings that had been so influential to him in the 1860s. Over the years, in increasingly powerful positions, Reid was able to promote his fellow Aberdonians and other artists whose careers had been made outside Edinburgh, a role which Caw and several other art historians subsequently preferred to credit to James Guthrie.⁷⁶ In spite of the changes that Reid was able to make, however, as late as 1888

⁷³ Edward Pinnington *George Paul Chalmers and the Art of His Time* Glasgow 1906 p 305.

⁷⁴ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 15 January 1879.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ James Caw *Sir James Guthrie PRSA* London 1932 p 32.

he could have little say in the hang. Patrick Adam and George's brother Archy, he believed, though each with paintings accepted, were badly treated, having been given very inferior positions for their work.⁷⁷ James Guthrie had been elected an associate member of the Royal Scottish Academy that year but his paintings - and those of his friends - suffered a similar fate - though accepted, they were hung in obscure positions far above and below the line.⁷⁸ Whilst the comments of the then President, William Fettes Douglas have often been quoted without realising their heavily ironic (and often extremely funny) nature, nevertheless whilst the list of paintings accepted to hang does not justify the belief that the younger artists were being ignored - they certainly were not taking centre stage, and the academicians reserved the best positions for their own work.

For White and Reid pure landscape had become the most important of subjects and, with the exception of a few forays which George Reid was to make when exposed to English art, anecdotal, narrative art was now anathema. This meant that they were in direct opposition to the established artistic bodies of the day, for whom such subject matter remained the mainstay of their existence. Thus when George Reid was invited to paint a picture for The Association for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in Scotland a problem arose, for he wished to paint a landscape, whilst the Society preferred an historical scene, which would uplift its audience when it was engraved for the masses. The Society was not totally opposed to landscape - it had bought two of George Reid's earliest paintings, *Cawdor Castle* and *An Autumnal Evening* (both untraced) from the Royal Scottish Academy in 1864, but its preference was for anecdotal art. Reid was forceful in encouraging the Association to commission pure landscape and suggested that, instead of seeking illustrations to Sir Walter Scott's novels, they should ask for landscape subjects, perhaps on a theme, such as Scottish rivers;

⁷⁷ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 27 February 1881 (see Appendix A). Patrick W. Adam (1854-1929) had been the first recipient of the MacLaine Watters medal in 1878. George Reid was coming up against prejudices which had forced MacTaggart to resign from the Hanging Committee three years earlier.

⁷⁸ Esme Gordon *The Royal Scottish Academy* Edinburgh 1976 p 157. Caw (James Guthrie p 47) states that Guthrie's election was unexpected but this seems unlikely since McTaggart, Alexander McKay, Wingate, Melville, Adam and of course Reid were all behind him. Guthrie, at twenty-nine, was, in no way, an unknown quantity.

The Tweed, The Forth, The Clyde - The Tay - what could be better? Just think of the Tweed for a moment. Berwick - Norham, Neidpath, Kelso, Dryburgh, Melrose and if the tributaries are included Jedburgh, Newark, Smailholm and a score of other places - all of which are classical! There is any amount of splendid material still left, both for pictures and for "bits".⁷⁹

Reid was trying to create both a market and a fashion for landscape. The suggestion was accepted. Pressure of work prevented Reid from starting the commission that year⁸⁰ but by 1884 a series of Tweed views was completed and published in book form. The following year he produced a similar volume on the River Clyde. Ever mindful of his own career, Reid arranged for one copy of the Tweed book to be sent to Queen Victoria and another to the Duke of Richmond.

Reid was commissioned to paint a landscape for the Association, an honour which caused him a great deal of indecision and worry. This was *November, Loch Alvie* (untraced). Reid worked on it between his portrait work, changing much over the course of several months.⁸¹ Further problems arose over the engraver used, Reid despaired over the quality of the work of the etcher whom the Association had employed to engrave Chalmers' *The Legend* and insisted that they use Rajon to engrave his own painting.

4.9 Aberdeen Society for the Preservation of Historic Buildings

Ever more involved in the administration of artistic societies and associations, in 1878 George Reid became actively involved in the preservation of his native city. A society had recently been formed to preserve the ancient domestic buildings of Aberdeen. Reid believed that, as well as preserving buildings, the society could, by means of drawings or photographs, preserve a record of those that were to be destroyed. It should also, he believed, not only preserve old buildings but attempt to improve the layout of new streets and the design of new buildings. Echoing John Ruskin's description of modern Venetian architecture he complained;

For the dreary monotony which characterises many of the new streets & the long lines of cottages, built each after the same dull pattern, there is no excuse.

⁷⁹ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 31 May 1882.

⁸⁰ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 7 July 1882.

⁸¹ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 13 June 1879.

No effort apparently is made by their builders to vary them or to give them individual character.⁸²

This description of Aberdeen's suburban streets echoes closely the words of J.S. Blackie of twenty years earlier, when he cautioned against "long rows of bare walls and square holes" which had been erected by "Puritans and Presbyterians of the ancient and unmitigated variety".⁸³ Reid suggested that the Association could instigate a prize to be awarded annually to the architect or builder who erected the most tasteful and convenient dwelling house during the year. Reid was as concerned with the designing of houses for the poor as for those of the rich. He was also concerned that the traditional, local characteristics of buildings should be continued in new buildings and that;

Regard for posterity ought in these matters to exercise a strong influence on our building. Much has come to us as an inheritance, and this it is our duty to preserve as far as may be expedient or possible unharmed for our successors.⁸⁴

It is interesting, however, to compare Reid's beliefs for the rest of the city with his own house, which, with its whitewashed walls, timber beams and Germanic roofs and towers, bore no relation whatsoever to the indigenous architecture of the city. Nevertheless Reid took an active part in the society, and himself sketched important buildings which were threatened with destruction, most notably the Jacobean mansion of Scotland's first noted portraitist, George Jamesone (c.1588-1644), on Schoolhill, which was demolished in 1898, only to be replaced by unremarkable tenement flats and shops.

Whilst Reid concerned himself with the exterior of Aberdeen houses, White concentrated on the interiors, giving a paper entitled How Can Art be Best Introduced into the Homes of Persons of Limited Income? at the 21st Annual Congress of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, which was held in Aberdeen from 19 to 26 September 1877. In the paper White's egalitarian views are elucidated for, he believes, "art must be for all, if it is to have any real interest for us, and be catholic and universal, like Mother Nature, whose image and superscription she bears."

⁸² George Reid to John Forbes White 24 June 1878.

⁸³ J.S. Blackie On Beauty Edinburgh 1858 p 34.

⁸⁴ George Reid to John Forbes White 24 June 1878.

For those who could not afford original art he encourages the acquisition of plaster casts, of truly great works such as the Elgin marbles or the Venus de Milo, which could be easily and cheaply purchased from South Kensington or Brucciani's studio in Covent Garden. He encourages the purchase of etchings and admires particularly those of Seymour Hayden and Whistler. White touches on interior decoration - distemper, in tertiary hues, and simple furniture, curtains and carpets were preferable, he believed to gaudy wallpapers and carpets which are so full of bowers and flowers that one might almost trip over them.⁸⁵ In addressing the wider issues of taste White once again shows his debt to Blackie, whose discourses on beauty covered subjects as varied as poetry and women's fashions. It is also interesting to compare the writings of Blackie and White with those of Émile Zola who similarly saw his role of defending new art as part of a larger struggle for naturalism in literature, indeed for honesty in all creative work.

⁸⁵ John Forbes White How Can Art be Best Introduced into the Homes of Persons of Limited Income? A Paper read before the National Association for the promotion of Social Science 21st Annual Congress, Aberdeen 19-26 September 1877, Aberdeen Free Press 1877.

CHAPTER 5

Travels near and Far Portraits and Somewhere to Hang Them 1880-1888

5.1 Samuel Smiles and George Reid's New Contacts with London

Throughout the 1880s Reid forged a friendship with the verbose Samuel Smiles¹ who kept Reid supplied with the artistic gossip of London, which Reid relished, particularly when it provided an opportunity to take a swipe at Alexander Macdonald;

I saw Macdonald yesterday. I was surprised to find Mrs Macdonald also...there was Millais , McLean and his sweetheart....McD is going down to see Hook on Saturday. He is up to the ears in engagements. He says he has already begun to be "chaffed" by the Aberdeen newspapers, about being for the fourth time at the Banquet of the Royal Academy.²

Samuel Smiles reported on events in London, on the artists and collections that he thought might interest Reid.

When you next come to London I will take you to see [James Staats] Forbes's collection of Dutch pictures. Forty of Israels, belonging to him, have been sent to the present exhibition. He has many more besides. His home is full - just like a picture shop.³

He also continually tried to persuade Reid to move there;

I went to see Watt's pictures the other day. Some of them are very fine - others very indifferent. He gives his pictures the hues of age... I am pleased that Murray and his family desire your picture to be placed in the R.A. Edinburgh is very fine, but do you know that most people regard it as but a provincial town. Everything now centres on London the capital.⁴

¹ Samuel Smiles (1812-1904) author and social reformer, was born in Haddington. He worked as a physician in Haddington and Leeds, later turning to journalism and editing the Leeds Times. He wrote several books, but is remembered chiefly for Self Help (1859) , which, with its short "Lives of Great Men" and admonition "do thyself likewise", was to become a favourite school prize for generations of British children. Reid painted Smiles three times, in 1876 (NPG, London -1377), in 1879 (SNPG - PG 1243) and in 1891 (SNPG -PG 631).

² Samuel Smiles to George Reid 3 May 1882.

³ Samuel Smiles to George Reid 6 January 1882.

⁴ Samuel Smiles to George Reid 26 January 1882.

Reid however, remained wary, realising that in Scotland he had little competition in the profitable field of portraiture, whilst in England the all pervading presence of Millais could be felt. Millais remained of constant interest, his portraits more than any other subject, for they were the branch of his art with which Reid could realistically try to compete.

By 1880 Reid had virtually cornered the portrait market in Scotland, a position Sir Henry Raeburn (1756-1823) and later Sir John Watson Gordon (1790-1864) had occupied for the previous century. Reid was aware of the paucity of good Scottish portraitists;

I see there is to be a portrait of Tulloch - (the Principal) - I hope they won't go to Norman Macbeth? If Gibson has anything to do with it I hope he will prevent this - Tell them to come to me - I would put off or give up some of the commissions I have undertaken in these parts and come south to do it. If however they can get Oules or Millais - or some of the good English painters to do the work it will be better still. MacNee is done I fear - and after him you have only Barclay and Herdman - and of course Macbeth.

Better still have a marble bust and get Hutcheson to do it - He wants work and I don't - and he will do it well.⁵

As he had hoped Reid himself won the commission to paint the Principal of St Andrews University Rev D.D. Tulloch. The commission came from Queen Victoria who had, apparently, admired Reid's portrait of Thomas Edward of 1875, which had been exhibited at the Royal Scottish Academy in 1877.⁶ Perhaps the gift of the Tweed book had also helped Reid's cause.

5.2 George Reid's "Death of Savonarola"

In spite of Reid's proclaimed devotion to landscape his interest in John Everett Millais affected not only his portrait painting but also kept him in touch with contemporary subject and historical painting. In 1879 he began work on a large and ambitious painting, *The Death of Savonarola* (AAG pl. 57) which, both in treatment and style, bears testament to his continuing admiration for Millais. Reid's only earlier attempt at historical painting had been in 1865 when he had painted *Death bestowed*

⁵ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 1 June 1879.

⁶ This portrait had been etched by Rajon and was owned by Samuel Smiles. Samuel Smiles to George Reid 2 December 1879.

on the Pictish King (untraced).⁷ This painting, however, may well have been a subject set by his tutor when he was at the Trustees Academy. Certainly he did not deem the work worthy of inclusion in a later catalogue of his work. In his painting of 1876 *The Passage of Montrose's Army* Reid confines the historical element to a small area of the canvas and it is, in every other way, a landscape. *The Death of Savonarola* was, therefore, the first strictly historical subject painting that Reid had attempted, entirely of his own volition. Duncan Macmillan has suggested convincingly that Reid's interest in such history paintings at this stage in his career may have had something to do with his ambitions to rise within the Scottish Academy, William Fettes Douglas having achieved the presidency relatively quickly and partly perhaps because of the popularity of his historical narrative paintings.⁸ The work of Orchardson and Pettie might also have been in Reid's mind. Their work had, like that of Fettes Douglas, proved to be immensely popular in Scotland but had also brought them fame where Reid was also determined to make a mark, at the Royal Academy in London.

The subject of Reid's painting was taken from Margaret Oliphant's Makers of Florence which had been published to great acclaim in 1876. Savonarola was an immensely attractive hero for the fiercely Presbyterian Reid, who could empathise with his desire to rid the streets of Florence of all vestiges of desire and debauchery, to pave them instead with "gold of the Apocalyptic vision, full of honour and truth".⁹

The scene depicted is not the death of Savonarola - which, Oliphant relates took place "when falsehood and torture had done their worst [and] he emerged once more, six weeks later into the May sunshine, in the great piazza and died there, like his Master, for the love of those who murdered him."¹⁰ Instead Reid chose to depict the scene in his cell some time earlier, after the torture was ended and Savonarola was waiting to die, a passage from the book which he used as a subtitle to the painting when exhibiting it in Aberdeen in 1890. The scene depicted describes how one of the penitents of the Order of the Temple, Jacopo Nicolini, came to Savonarola's cell to comfort him during his last hours. Nicolini is covered from head to foot in the black

⁷ John Anderson to George Reid 21 June 1865.

⁸ In conversation with the author.

⁹ Margaret Oliphant Makers of Florence London 1876 p 312.

robe of the Misericordia, a hood conceals his face. Savonarola requested Nicolini to sit down and make a pillow of his knee, where he might rest his head. Lying down, apparently on the floor, with this support he fell asleep,...."while the night dispersed slowly out of all the dim corners, and the blue morning stole upon the world; and the great barred window grew light".¹¹

Normally a fast worker, Reid had immense difficulty in finishing the painting and seemed unsure of it, perhaps because he was tackling such a subject virtually for the first time. He was not accustomed to painting interiors and evidently had some difficulty with the composition;

I had a look at Savonarola yesterday and found out what it wanted in the background. It will easily be put right. It is at the corner. The cill of a window should be shown with a water jug and a napkin - the light strikes the edge of the wall and cill but no direct daylight is seen - only the suggestion that a window is there. The floor should go further back. It was here before - I should like much to have it in next RSA but I don't know if I will be able to get at it.¹²

Reid had been keen to be as historically accurate as possible and, early on in the painting's execution, had implored White, who was in Florence at the time;

don't forget the portrait of Savonarola - and take a good look at the colour of the Hall so that you may be able to help me with my background.¹³

Reid also sought the help and advice of other friends. John Pettie commented on it when visiting St Lukes. James Clarke Hook saw the painting in its early stages and suggested enlarging the figure a little, in order to make it life-size.¹⁴ (Reid did not follow his advice and the figure of Savonarola remained at a rather unsatisfactory 4 ft 6 in.). Savonarola's cell is severely simple, sombre and mysterious. Nicolino's face is completely obscured by his habit and that of Savonarola deathly pale (Reid modelled the face of Savonarola on the frontispiece of Oliphant's book - a head of Savonarola in profile, engraved by C.H. Jeens and his body on the recumbent effigy of a knight from the Museum of Ravenna, a plaster cast of which existed in the Royal Scottish Academy

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p 317. The painting was exhibited in 1883 at the Royal Scottish Academy as *The Last Sleep of Savonarola*.

¹¹ *Ibid.* p 323-4.

¹² George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 3 April 1882.

¹³ George Reid to John Forbes White 2 October 1879.

plaster cast collection).¹⁵ The scene provided an opportunity for Reid to depict a dark and sombre interior reminiscent of Chalmers' work and the contemporary work of Millais, such as his *The Grey Lady* (sold Sotheby's 4 June 1997) painted in 1883 and exhibited at the Royal Academy that year, which depicted a similarly eerie and mysterious interior. Reid's difficulties with the painting - the way he eschewed all still life detail (such as the water jug and the napkin) and his darkening of the scene over several months has parallels in Chalmers' extended work on *The Legend. The Death of Savonarola* was finally finished in time to be exhibited at the Royal Scottish Academy in 1883. Whilst Millais was to continue with the theme - even as late as 1895 when he painted *Speak! Speak* Reid abandoned such subject matter, the only exception being a large painting of Thomas à Kempis (AAG), with arched altar-like top and Symbolist overtones which he did not finish and which remained in his studio until his death.¹⁶

5.3 George Reid and John Irvine Smith visit Italy

White and Reid had both attended the same school as Byron, whose writings on Venice had inspired so many - from Eugène Delacroix to Giuseppe Verdi. For Reid to travel to Italy, and especially Venice, was a much desired pilgrimage. As early as 16th September 1878 Samuel Smiles had asked Reid if he would like to accompany him to Rome. Evidently Reid had been too busy and it was to be two more years before he was able to go there. In 1880, whilst John Forbes White travelled to The United States of America, George Reid finally visited Italy. He left on 31st March and was accompanied by the man who had now become his closest friend, J. Irvine Smith. The trip took just over one month. Reid viewed the trip as a holiday and his input into its organisation was very limited. Irvine Smith decided on the route, having been to Italy before. Nevertheless work was never far from Reid's mind and in Fiesole he had dug up some irises with the intention of painting them on his return. Two years later he sent one pot of them to Irvine Smith, writing of them that they;

¹⁴ George Reid to John Forbes White 2 October 1879 (see Appendix A).

¹⁵ Glasgow Herald 8 April 1905.

¹⁶ This oddity in Reid's *œuvre* may have been a homage to Jozef Israëls, who had painted a picture of Thomas à Kempis in 1862 for the Historical Gallery of Amsterdam's artists' club, Arti et Amicitiae, which had been founded in 1839 and which Israëls had joined in 1848.

will serve to keep you in mind of San Marco, and Savonarola - and of what were to me happy days.¹⁷

Reid's thoughts on work however did not tempt him to portray what he saw on his travels, writing to White;

Venice has been done once and for all and by the only man capable of doing it - Turner, and no-one need think to throw any new light on it - Turner got at the essence of the place - its colour and light.¹⁸

The art critic and social reformer John Ruskin (1819-1900) had published his study of Turner, the first volume of Modern Painters, in 1843. Partly as a result of this Turner had come to be seen as the benchmark for landscape painters and, in spite of White's preference for Dutch and French art and the way in which he had tried to steer Reid towards a similar path, Reid was no exception to this rule. Indeed all the men in Reid's circle admired the work of J.M.W. Turner, Reid once writing to Irvine Smith;

You are becoming a rich man in Turners. The disease grows with what it feeds on - but the more I see of J.M.W. T's work the greater a man he grows - a giant among figures.¹⁹

Yet soon after his return, on 8th May 1880, Reid took up the challenge, producing just one oil painting of Venice, *San Giorgio Maggiore* (AAG pl. 58). In this painting Reid illustrates very clearly his debt to Turner. His viewpoint - at or very near the point where the Grand Canal joins the Canale delle Giudecca - is exactly the same as that adopted by Turner fifty years before in 1819 in a watercolour of the church (Tate Gallery TB CLXXX1-4) but, whilst its composition resembles that of Turner in every other respect, Reid's painting is more akin to the work of Gerrit Mollinger, who, even ten years after his death, continued to exert a strong influence on Reid. The strongly horizontal composition recalls, more than anything, Mollinger's painting *Meerkirk, Clearing up after Rain* (AAG pl. 59). Both paintings share an overall uniformity of tone and in both too the sky takes up over half of the canvas, whilst much of the remainder is devoted to the sea. The buildings, depicted from a distance, take up less than a quarter of the composition.

¹⁷ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 30 May 1882.

¹⁸ George Reid to John Forbes White 24 April 1880.

¹⁹ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 25 May 1881.

It could be argued that such a formula admirably suited the subject, but in comparison to Turner's rendition of the church and surrounding buildings here they seem more squat - even flattened - in shape. Whereas Turner had painted the scene in the early morning, with the sun about to rise and the light behind the buildings, Reid depicts it at the end of the day, (virtually the only time of day for a Hague School artist) with sunlight shining on the façades and the moon low in the sky. By painting the church and other buildings in full light, their physical structure and architectural details are very clear, whereas in Turner's watercolour, where the light is behind the buildings, they are silhouetted and, apart from their outlines, are devoid of minute detail. Turner's concern is, as Reid recognised, with the atmosphere of the place whereas for Reid sky, sea and buildings are three distinct areas that are each treated differently. Whereas Turner leaves the church and monastery seemingly floating, with no indication given of distance, size or perspective, Reid's view is altogether more literal; moored gondolas and a triangle of jetty in the lower left corner give interest and suggest a foreground. In spite of the large expanses of sky and water such concrete, physical objects enable the eye to conceive of a foreground, mid-ground and background - they suggest both distance and perspective - and in this painting Reid deliberately and effectively conveys a sense of both place and time. Though not visionary like Turner's exquisite watercolour, the painting is accomplished. In spite of its clarity the buildings, in direct (albeit evening) light glow and merge somewhat into water and sky, giving an overall impression of lucidity.

Reid continued to use Mollinger's landscape formula for virtually all of his landscape paintings and even as late as 1888 his painting of *Montrose* (pl. 13) displays a virtually identical division of the canvas. It was to be ten more years before Reid felt able finally to abandon this, by then antiquated, composition and adopt the high horizon favoured by his younger Scottish colleagues (as in *Durham AAG* pl. 60). Thus the artist who, virtually single-handedly, had introduced a new way of painting landscape to Scotland in the early 1870s developed from this format slowly, leaving himself stylistically far behind a younger generation of artists who were very receptive to the compositional devices of Jules Bastien-Lepage and other French artists.

5.4 The Portraits of George Reid

Completely unaffected by the strong and lasting influence of Gerrit Mollinger - who was a landscape painter - Reid's portrait style developed and changed throughout his career. In early examples, such as *In the Garden, Auchlunies* of 1870, Reid depicts full-length figures who are integrated into a minutely detailed background. The painting is accomplished, but Reid reveals his inability to capture the character of his sitters. By the end of the decade, however, Reid's portrait style had been transformed. He had honed his skills on painting portraits of his closest friends - George Paul Chalmers and John Forbes White in 1872 - and had come to understand the dimensions of the human form, particularly the face. Through his knowledge of Frans Hals and Rembrandt he had come to understand how a momentary expression could be captured and how, with a few deft brushstrokes and dabs of white, he could catch a glint in an eye, a sadness in the soul. Reid projected his own, very masculine nature on to his sitters, giving them bearing and stature (Reid rarely attempted or succeeded in depicting women). Soon commissions began to come in and, as the social stature of his sitters became more elevated, Reid was required to paint larger portraits which would fill the grand walls of Town and County Buildings, University Halls and even Parliament House. This increase in format forced Reid to abandon his realistic minuteness - which could not be sustained on a large scale - and adopt instead a broader, freer treatment. Whilst continuing to portray his most important sitters full-figure, Reid did this on a large scale. For less important sitters he began to adopt the three-quarter format, which Millais also preferred at this time, as with *Mrs Jopling* (Private Collection) of 1878. The format had proved popular with artists and sitters, allowing as it did a greater immediacy and sense of the presence of the sitter. This can be clearly illustrated with Reid's portrait of The Rev. A. Gerard LLD of 1879 (AAG pl. 61). In this informal but forceful painting the sitter seems captured but for a moment - disturbed from his writing, pen still in his right hand and attired in a dressing gown.

Reid's portraits became increasingly simple and uncluttered. He came to rely on the presence of the sitter to carry the work and in this aspect his portraits recall the contemporary work of Edouard Manet, which Reid and White could see at the Paris

Salon. Through Manet, and later John Singer Sargent, Reid came to understand the art of Velasquez, who was to influence 19th century British portrait painting more than any other artist. Reid was not directly affected by Velasquez's art until sometime later, however, Rembrandt and Israels being of more importance to him at this stage. For a northerner like Reid - whose training in The Netherlands had made a far deeper impression on him than his time with Yvon in Paris - Rembrandt above all remained the benchmark for portraitists. Rembrandt's influence on Reid was at its strongest in the 1870s - he never borrowed as literally as Chalmers was to do in portraits such as *Aitchie* (pl. 23) but nevertheless in his colour, lighting, composition and technique, Reid remained deeply in Rembrandt's debt.

The influence of his Scottish forbears on Reid, however should not be ignored. Of them Raeburn and Watson Gordon probably had the greatest influence. For Caw, writing in 1908, Raeburn was the greatest of Scottish portrait painters, for his "immediate impression of reality, and in the simplification of pictorial motive that involved".²⁰ Reid could have learned from Raeburn (whose work had been celebrated in a large and influential exhibition in 1876) how to use a restricted palette to powerful effect and from Watson-Gordon's later paintings how forceful a low-toned, limited palette of greys and blacks could be. Watson Gordon's later, more expansive and expressive brushwork and the way in which he "subordinated all other areas of the canvas to the head of the sitter, on which the light focused and in which the character was revealed"²¹ may also have influenced Reid. The portraits of James McNeill Whistler, whose art Reid had championed in the "Veri Vindex" article as early as 1868 and those of William Quiller Orchardson also exemplified the elegance and simplicity that Reid was attempt to achieve in his work. As Duncan Macmillan has rightly suggested both these artists, who were a few years older than Reid and more established in their careers, could well have provided the inspiration for him to follow a similar artistic path.²² It is difficult to determine whether such qualities in Reid's portraits came from his predecessors and contemporaries in Scotland or directly from his knowledge of European art. Certainly their work cannot be reconciled with the

²⁰ James Caw Scottish Painting Past and Present 1620-1908 London 1908 p 69.

²¹ *Ibid.* p 81.

²² In conversation with the author

belief that neither Raeburn nor Watson Gordon owed much to foreign schools as is contested by Caw²³ (though perplexingly, only twelve pages later, he states that Raeburn and Watson-Gordon admired Velasquez over all other portraitists).²⁴ Reid, Caw believed, had grasped the three most important elements of portraiture; namely vivid characterisation, power of expression and simplicity of design²⁵ but he found his lighting forced, his colour crude and his drawing over-incisive. Certainly, whilst always powerful and forthright, Reid's portraits often lack the spontaneity and instinctive perception and understanding of his sitter as is revealed in Raeburn's best work.

Having built on a studio to St Lukes by 1878 Reid soon found that pressure of commissioned portraits in Edinburgh, which required several sittings, meant that he needed to find a studio there. In 1882 he had recently finished portraits of Sir Bartle-
Frere,²⁶ Lord Justice General Inglis and Duncan MacLaren M.P. and was soon to begin a portrait of the Marquis of Breadalbane, men who could not be expected to come to Aberdeen for their sittings. Reid asked Irvine Smith to look out for a suitable studio in Edinburgh.²⁷ In May 1883 Reid took rooms in 28 Queen Street, Edinburgh for which he paid rent of £60 and rates of £10. He thought the cost rather dear for two rooms as he planned to use them only in the winter months but he thought that Archy could use them when he was not there.²⁸ Reid hoped that having the rooms would allow him to catch up with his long list of portrait commissions, but throughout the summer months he was occupied painting sitters in England²⁹ and by August was considering cancelling some long-standing appointments for sittings, which had been overtaken by more illustrious commissions.³⁰ As his work in both Edinburgh and London increased, Reid realised that of necessity his time in Aberdeen would be reduced to little more than a lengthy summer holiday.³¹ This was indeed the case. St Lukes became the home of his

²³ *Ibid.* p 69.

²⁴ *Ibid.* p 81.

²⁵ *Ibid.* p 287.

²⁶ Sir Henry Bartle Edward Frere (1815-1884) was governor of Bombay 1862-1867 and from 1877 - 1880 Governor of the Cape and High Commissioner of South Africa.

²⁷ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 3 April 1882 (see Appendix A).

²⁸ George Reid to Mia Reid 17 August 1882 (see Appendix A).

²⁹ George Reid to John Forbes White 30 May 1882 (see Appendix A).

³⁰ George Reid to Mia Reid 15 August 1882 (see Appendix A).

³¹ George Reid to Mia Reid 22 August 1882 (see Appendix A).

extended family. His mother, recently widowed, Archy and various members of the family lived there, whilst Mia and George lived increasingly in Edinburgh.

5.5 John Everett Millais

Reid had always admired Millais and when a chance came to meet him, he gladly took advantage of it. The opportunity came in 1877 when Alexander Macdonald gave a dinner party at a hotel in Jermyn Street, London, to which he invited Thomas Faed, H.T. Wells, John Pettie, Charles Keene and also George Reid and John Everett Millais. Some days later Millais invited Macdonald, Keene and Reid to lunch at his home at 7 Cromwell Place. They viewed his studio and saw there the portraits of the two Miss Hoares (private collection, on loan to the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge) and *The Yeoman of the Guard* which Millais was working on at the time.³²

In February 1878 Reid took over the former studio of John Everett Millais at Cromwell Place.³³ Reid had arranged his tenancy through his friend Samuel Smiles who in turn knew the Scottish artist James Archer.³⁴ Archer had taken Millais' old house when he had vacated it the previous year. Reid took advantage of the connection with Millais and visited him in his new studio round the corner at Palace Gate, writing with pride;

what a splendid place his new studio is! He was very kind. He turned round a fine picture nearly finished - "The Master of Ravenswood and Lucy Ashton" The Master of Ravenswood is splendid - so is Lucy Ashton's head leaning on his shoulder. A rocky, mossy, ferny background with a small burn zig-zagging through rocks and ferns - It is the first time I have seen Ravenswood not looking like Hamlet in reduced circumstances - He is seedy in his costume but a gentleman to the tips of his fingers - he is splendidly set on his legs - as firm and staunch as an oak....³⁵

³² J.G. Millais *The Life and Letters of Sir John Everett Millais* London 1899 p 445.

³³ George Reid to John Forbes White 6 February 1878. 7 Cromwell Place is now the home of the National Art Collections Fund. Although Reid did use the studio in all exhibition catalogues his address is still given as St Lukes.

³⁴ James Archer RSA was born in Edinburgh in 1824 and died in 1904. He exhibited regularly at the Royal Academy and lived at 7 Cromwell Place from 1879-1888.

³⁵ George Reid to John Forbes White 6 February 1878.

Millais was working on *Princes in the Tower* at the time and also a landscape, *St Martin's Summer* (Montreal Museum of Fine Arts) which Reid did not admire; his views on Millais' work were always somewhat complicated;

sometime one thinks that he really knows something - at another time that he knows nothing.³⁶

Reid's interest in Millais verged on the obsessional. He recognised him to be his greatest competition at that period in the field of portraiture. Whilst Millais' output of narrative pictures was not something that Reid emulated to any great degree (*The Death of Savonarola* being the exception), he nevertheless took great interest in all of his work. Reid visited the Millais exhibition in 1881 and admired much of it, though tellingly, like Roger Fry visiting the Manchester Exhibition of Millais in 1887, he preferred the early paintings to the more recent ones.³⁷ Reid commented on Millais' ability with colour and saw parallels in his early heads with the work of Memling and Van Dyck. He liked this "sharp, microscopic finish" in spite of the fact that it was diametrically opposed to his own technique - and Millais' current style - and to the tastes of White, to whom he was writing.³⁸ Reid lunched with Millais at his home and, visiting his studio, saw *Cimbella* and his portrait of Disraeli (National Portrait Gallery) which he had just begun. A few days later Millais visited Reid's studio and admired his current work, a half-length portrait of Sir Bartle-Frere³⁹ which was exhibited at the Royal Academy that year and at the Royal Scottish Academy in 1882.

Malcolm Warner has shown how Millais' portraits became less popular as he was swept out of the scene by the swaggering bravura of Sargent's brush.⁴⁰ Certainly Millais' later work lacked the sentimental aspects and obvious charm of his paintings of the 1860s and, with its more quiet, solemn mood, could not compete with the grand sweeps and elegant poses of Sargent's best work. Millais' work of the 1870s and 1880s suggests that he was in all probability more influenced by the art of his Scottish friends than by London-based artistic styles and fashions. It is not impossible that the

³⁶ George Reid to John Forbes White 6 February 1878.

³⁷ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 13 March 1881 (see Appendix A).

³⁸ George Reid to John Forbes White 18 March 1881 (see Appendix A).

³⁹ George Reid to John Forbes White (see Appendix A).

⁴⁰ Unpublished paper given at Symposium on John Everett Millais, Tate Gallery 1997.

interchange between Reid and Millais affected the work of both artists and that both men's portrait and landscape styles developed and changed in response to each other's work. It is almost certain that, as with his landscapes of the 1870s, such as *Chill October*, Millais' portraits at this date were influenced by his Scottish friends - their writings, the pictures that they painted and those that they owned. The simplicity of composition, limited palette and sober mood of Reid's work - a style which he had assimilated from myriad sources - Raeburn, Watson-Gordon, Velasquez, Hals and Rembrandt - all came to dominate Millais' work too. Nowhere is this more clearly illustrated than in Millais' portrait of William Ewart Gladstone of 1885 (Christ Church, Oxford), in which the background and strong lighting are particularly reminiscent of Reid's portraits of a slightly earlier date, such as *George Paul Chalmers* of 1872, *George Washington Wilson* of 1879 (pl. 17) or *Alexander Macdonald* of 1879 (all AAG) the last of which had been exhibited at The Royal Academy in 1879. There were also close connections between the sitters of Millais and Reid. Reid, for example, painted the portrait of Thomas Carlyle's friend, disciple and biographer James Anthony Froude in 1881 (untraced), four years after Millais painted (though did not complete) a portrait of Carlyle (National Portrait Gallery). Tellingly Israels too, on at least one occasion, visited Millais in his studio - yet another exchange between a British artist and the Dutch master which is very likely to have been orchestrated by John Forbes White or George Reid.⁴¹

By 1878 Alexander Macdonald owned two paintings by Millais, *The Convalescent* of 1875 and *Bright Eyes* of 1877 (both AAG). Towards the end of that year he was evidently trying to acquire Millais' recently completed portrait of Lily Langtrey, *A Jersey Lily* (Jersey Museums Service) and was using Millais' friend Joseph Jopling as an intermediary. Millais was in no hurry to release the painting, however, being very fond of it himself, and Macdonald did not manage to acquire it.⁴² This seems to have formed no rift in their friendship, however, and Millais kept in contact with Macdonald.

⁴¹ J. Irvine Smith to George Reid 12 November 1883 and Jozef Israels to George Reid 12 November 1883.

⁴² See Malcolm Warner, *Millais: Portraits* exhibition catalogue, National Portrait Gallery, London 1999 p. 211.

5.6 Alexander Macdonald's Collection of Artists Portraits

Millais was courted by both Macdonald and Reid and slowly developed a friendship with both men. Since he was often in Perthshire it was relatively easy for him to travel to Aberdeen. In 1880 he was the guest of Alexander Macdonald and stayed with him at Kepplestone. Macdonald was keen to have a portrait of his famous guest, so arranged for him to sit for Reid at St Lukes on two consecutive mornings. According to John Guille Millais,⁴³ the venture was entirely spontaneous, having been suggested by Macdonald on the spur of the moment. Hunting about the studio, Reid apparently came across a suitable frame for the portrait, the sketch was placed in it, and Millais himself carried it across to Kepplestone.⁴⁴ John Guille Millais' account is repeated by Mia Reid, Allan Hook and much later, by Charles Carter.⁴⁵

From the early 1880s Millais had used photography to confirm the position of sitters.⁴⁶ He would have Rupert Potter, who was a close friend, photograph his paintings in progress. Potter deliberately over-exposed the plates, thus making them rather pale, so that Millais could then adjust the composition by drawing in pen and ink over the photograph and then transfer his amendments to the oil painting. Millais' ink additions are clearly visible in one such photograph of a portrait of a Mrs Kennard, which is included in Millais' own photograph album (AAG). Examination of Reid's portrait of Millais (pl. 62) suggests that Reid was also using photography, and indeed the painting bears a striking resemblance to a photograph of Millais which was also in his photograph album (pl. 63). Allan Hook⁴⁷ recounts how Millais had lent a hand in working on this portrait himself. The painting is now catalogued as the work of the two artists and is inscribed *From R and JEM to AM 21st Oct 1880*. This fact further enforces the hypothesis that, in spite of several clear accounts to the contrary, it was indeed based upon a photograph, since the angle of the head is entirely inappropriate for a self-portrait. It may be that Millais' contribution included supplying the photograph on which the portrait was based. That three different accounts of the

⁴³ J.G. Millais The Life and Letters of John Everett Millais London 1899 p 446.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p 445.

⁴⁵ Charles Carter "A Gallery of Artists' Portraits - A Yardstick of Taste" Apollo 1961 Vol 73 p 4.

⁴⁶ See Mary Bennet Millais Walker Art Gallery Exhibition Catalogue 1967 pp 11 & 58.

⁴⁷ Allan James Hook The Life of James Clarke Hook RA London 1929 p 247.

events omit to mention the indubitable use of photography suggests at some sort of cover up by all involved. Whilst it has been shown elsewhere how unreliable John Guille Millais' account of his father was⁴⁸ in the case of this incident the deceit or interpretation of the story may well have been provided by the protagonists - for it was in the interests of all these men not to admit to their use of photography.

The spontaneity of the portrait must also be questioned, for Macdonald already owned by this date two portraits of a similar format - the earliest being Reid's small sketch of George Paul Chalmers which dated from 1878⁴⁹ and the other one of Macdonald himself, also painted by Reid. Both are slightly smaller than the Millais head - the portrait of Chalmers measures 26.7 x 21.5 cm. and the Macdonald canvas 22 x 18.5 cm. rather than 30.5 x 25.4 cm. which was the size decided upon for the Millais head. That the Millais canvas is only slightly larger suggests that Reid and Macdonald may have decided that it was a better format for their illustrious guest. Certainly it was not just picked up by chance in the studio as stated in the various accounts, for Reid did not use such a small-sized canvas at this date for any other purpose. George Reid had recently painted a small sketch portrait of Alexander Macdonald, which is dated 2nd October 1880. The Millais study is dated the 21st of that month. The existence of the sketch of Macdonald, which could be seen as almost a frontispiece to a forthcoming suite of artists' portraits, could suggest that the Millais sitting was more planned than Millais' son suggests and that, by the time of his visit to Aberdeen, both Macdonald and Reid were prepared, with canvas stretched and brushes at the ready. Duncan Macmillan has pointed out how the current discussions about the proposed Scottish National Portrait Gallery (which opened in 1889) might also have put Macdonald in mind of creating a portrait collection. He would also have been aware of the collection of artists' portraits at the Uffizi and of Earl Buchan's private collection of historical portraits which, like Macdonald's collection, used a uniform, small format.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ See John Sutherland "Original Sources for *The Woman in White*" Appendix B for *The Woman in White* by Wilkie Collins Oxford University Press World Classics 1996 p 661.

⁴⁹ At some time it became the property of James Reid of Auchterarder and was donated by him to Aberdeen Art Gallery in 1928.

⁵⁰ In conversation with the author.

However these first portraits came about, from them Macdonald devised a plan to collect numerous uniformly-sized portraits and self portraits of his artist-friends. One of the closest of these was James Clarke Hook (1819-1907). When in the south of England Macdonald would fill a weekend by having dinner at the Royal Academy, then going down to the Hook family home, Silverbeck, near Farnham in Surrey. The Macdonalds first visited Silverbeck in 1880 when Charles Keene, Joseph Farquharson, and Robert Dudley, with his wife and son were also houseguests.⁵¹ On a second visit, in 1882, other guests included H.W.B. Davis and Linley Sambourne. Allan Hook photographed the group (pl. 64) and indeed photography was a common interest, as Sambourne based much of his work on photographs, which he took himself. He had taken photographs of Mr and Mrs Macdonald and put them to use when designing a Christmas card for the couple that year (pl. 65). He also incorporated the pose of H.W.B. Davis in Hook's photograph in several cartoons of the members of the Royal Academy, as in pl. 66, where Davis holds the same pose as in the Silverbeck photograph, crook in hand, and is seen to the top right of the crown.⁵² Hook was also painted by Reid at Kepplestone. The Hooks were on a painting tour of Scotland, which they were taking by yacht. They had visited Kepplestone previously, on a return trip from Shetland in 1872 and again returning from visiting Israels at The Hague in 1874.⁵³ In 1881 they called in at Aberdeen and stayed for two nights at Kepplestone. As he had with Millais, Macdonald instructed Reid to paint a small portrait head of Hook, which was accomplished, according to Hook's son Allan and George Reid himself, after one or two sittings.⁵⁴ This portrait was also inscribed and dated *From R and JCH to AM 1881*. As well as Millais, J.C. Hook and Charles Keene, several other artists were also painted in Aberdeen by Reid. Macdonald wrote to many other artists asking whether they could supply him with such a painting. On receiving their consent Macdonald sent them the canvas already stretched. A.J. Hook recounts how Macdonald's popularity amongst artists facilitated the project - very few, if any, refused the request and ultimately a total of ninety-one portraits was obtained. Macdonald

⁵¹ Hook *op. cit.* pp 244-5.

⁵² Hook *Ibid.* pp 246-7.

⁵³ Hook *Ibid.* p 205.

⁵⁴ George Reid to John Forbes White 25 October 1880. (See Appendix A).

preferred to have self portraits rather than portraits, as if to confirm the true friendship of the artist in question. Whilst he retained the two original portraits of Millais and Hook painted by Reid, both artists also each contributed a self portrait to add to the series.⁵⁵ (Millais' self-portrait, somewhat more flattering and more lifelike than the first, was painted in 1883). The intention had been to collect heads but in one case - that of E.J. Gregory RA - a half-length filling the canvas was sent.

The first artists called upon to provide their patron with a portrait were the artists whom Macdonald knew best - Jozef Israels and John Pettie in 1881 and George Reid in 1882. Soon the academicians whom Macdonald had patronised and befriended sent portraits and self portraits; including the president of the Royal Academy, Sir Edward Poynter, Edward Armitage, T.O. Barlow, Sir Joseph Edgar Boehm, W.Q. Orchardson, Lawrence Alma-Tadema, Richard Andsell, Richard Redgrave and W.F. Yeames. The collection shows Macdonald to be well entrenched in Victorian art, with only the odd foray into other, more modern developments. It reflects Macdonald's circle of artist-friends and clearly illustrates his devotion to the English art establishment. The vast majority of the artists were English. Four presidents of the Royal Academy were included, and no fewer than fifty-three academicians. In contrast, only nineteen of the artists were Scottish - just two presidents of the Royal Scottish Academy are portrayed, seven academicians, two honorary academicians and one associate. Of all the artists only five were foreign - (six if Alma-Tadema is included) and of these most Macdonald had met through White and Reid or else knew through his business contacts. Architect Charles Garnier, for example, was included because he had used Macdonald's granite for the Paris Opera (the British architect J.L. Pearson, who built Truro Cathedral, was included for the same reason). A self portrait of Jules Breton was supplied in 1883, presumably because Macdonald had made contact with him as a result of acquiring *The Gleaner* some eight years earlier.

Allan Hook states how Macdonald was particularly supportive of younger artists.⁵⁶ This compliment is true to an extent but he acquired work by younger artists only when they already had a firm footing in the art establishment - as was the case

⁵⁵ Hook *op. cit.* pp 247-9.

⁵⁶ Hook *Ibid.* p 245.

with the sons of James Clarke Hook, Allan and Bryan (neither of whom, however, was considered illustrious enough to contribute portraits to Macdonald's collection). When venturing into more risky territory he did so only when others persuaded him to and even then was cautious of his selection of a particular artist's work as when, for example, he had bought one of Israels' most sentimental works, *The Sleepers*. Macdonald's collection of artists' portraits included almost all the men whose work he owned and several whose he did not. They gave works, because they knew Macdonald and admired him as a collector and friend. Perhaps they felt pity too for this man who was so severely disabled yet still made efforts to attend the Royal Academy and mix with them at their annual dinner. In creating this collection of artists' portraits Macdonald was affirming his position as benefactor and connoisseur - suggesting indeed at more than benefaction, but true friendship.

It seems that Macdonald liked to be thought of as a daring, knowledgeable and intuitive collector, as John Forbes White most certainly was, but for Reid, such beliefs could only bring his disdain for his near neighbour. A visit from John Pettie, Joseph Farquharson and James Clarke Hook to Kepplestone prompted one of many venomous letters from Reid to White on the subject:

Joseph Farquharson was across today. He had been dining at Macdonald's last night. I have been unable to share in his despatches in consequence of my illness - From what C. Hunter and J. Farquharson let drop M must be losing a little of his usual caution, and is now trying on the heavy "connooser" with artists. He will soon get found out if he does. It is all very well to pose before Otto McQueen - or Robert Lumsden or young John Crombie and his friends who don't know any more about painting than he himself does but it is foolish to try it on with artists who as a rule are sharp enough in detecting humbug or pretence in that direction. I fear no painter below the grade of R.A. is now safe from him, and you know the gauche character of his remarks only too well to be in doubt as to their effect upon the artist who is favoured with them. I wish D would venture to give him a hint to play the rôle of "connooser" only in safe company but I fear his vanity would be hurt in a way that would have unpleasant results on our intercourse for a long time - so - unless I forget myself - I shall hold my peace. Somehow it is very ridiculous - the LLD of Edgehill is more endurable - for he takes a vast amount of pains in getting up

facts and dates and digesting dry catalogues - M hasn't even their negative virtue".⁵⁷

The letter is as telling of Reid as it is of Macdonald but nevertheless Macdonald's collecting and his evident desire to be closely associated with the English art establishment does suggest some veracity in Reid's spiteful comments.

Reid and White were aware of this uneducated aspect of Macdonald's collecting, and what Reid certainly perceived to be his desire for fame. He did not buy paintings that he admired - as White did - but instead commissioned the most famous artists of the day to paint works for him⁵⁸. As a result he often came to own smaller, later versions of paintings which often dated from several years before.

Reid resented Macdonald's frequent attendance at the annual dinner of the Royal Academy. He disliked his "hob-nobbing" and was embarrassed by his boastful speeches;

Apropos of Mac - there are many spiteful stories going in this little Paddlington. His dining for the third time with the R.A. has given offence to less favoured "Hamateurs" north of the Tweed - I fear his own vain glorious speeches have provoked much of it. He should study to wear his honours meekly - but somehow doesn't.⁵⁹

Reid was also irritated by Macdonald's false modesty;

That it was such a high and peculiar honour for ordinary mortals, that he would not hope to receive another invitation to the R.A. this year - a few days since I heard that he had received an invitation "but that he was uncertain if he would accept" which, put into plain English probably means that while talking in the first strain he had received the invitation - and doubtless accepted by return of

⁵⁷ George Reid to John Forbes White 2 October 1879. The LLd of Edgehill was the advocate Alexander Webster (1860-1920). His collection of paintings included work by Scottish artists Dyce, Chalmers and Thomas Faed. He owned paintings by Dutch artists Jan van Os, Jacob Ruysdael, Peter de Wint, Jan van Diest, Allart van Everdingen, Philip Sadée and Alexander Gerrit Mollinger. His real passion, however, were watercolours. Included in his large collection were watercolours by William Clarkson Stanfield, Thomas Rowlandson, David Cox, Richard Parkes Bonington, John Glover, William Henry Hunt, Sam Bough, Miles Birkett Foster and William Callow. He bequeathed this collection to Aberdeen Art Gallery in 1921 and with it a sum of money which, he stipulated, should be used for the acquisition of paintings.

⁵⁸ Macdonald must have commissioned Alma-Tadema *A Garden Altar*; "Mr Smiles has seen Macdonald's Tadema - a dancing girl of some kind - just begun" (George Reid to John Forbes White 6 February 1878).

⁵⁹ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 7 June 1881.

post and then for reasons but known to himself talked in the second strain. He is a curious mortal withal.⁶⁰

Yet, in spite of his faults, Reid and White cared for Macdonald, no doubt more so since the death of his only child, Alex Roderick Gordon Macdonald, at the age of fifteen, in January 1878, at which point Macdonald had increased his purchases of art, perhaps to compensate for his loss. He was pitied too because of his physical disability which also may have increased his desire to surround himself with what he at least believed was good art.

5.7 The Death of Alexander Macdonald

Confined to a wheelchair for many years, Alexander Macdonald suffered frequent bouts of illness. Since 1880 his physical paralysis had begun to affect his general health and, on his return from Venice, Reid discovered that Macdonald was very ill, with open wounds that would not heal.⁶¹ When Millais visited in 1880 Macdonald was ill once again.⁶² By the beginning of 1884 his state has worsened considerably. He had caught a chill when at the Royal Academy and in London and according to Reid left in a great hurry⁶³ fearing that he might be laid up in London, but no improvement came.⁶⁴ By 30th November 1880 Reid could report an improvement in Macdonald's health to Irvine Smith, but by 10th December he had to tell him that Macdonald was "far from well" and on 27th December 1884, aged forty-eight, Alexander Macdonald died.

Reid returned for the funeral and John Forbes White wrote Macdonald's obituary for The Evening Gazette.⁶⁵ The funeral, which was held on 31st December was a grand affair, Macdonald being accorded all the pomp of a local dignitary. The funeral service was held in the drawing room of Kepplestone. The funeral procession then proceeded through Aberdeen's main streets. Once it reached the Free Church

⁶⁰ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 9 April 1884.

⁶¹ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith July 1880 (see Appendix A).

⁶² Samuel Smiles to George Reid 21 October 1880 (see Appendix A).

⁶³ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 19 May 1884 (see Appendix A).

⁶⁴ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 5 January 1884 (see Appendix A).

⁶⁵ George Reid to Mia Reid 30 December 1884.

College (at the westernmost end Union Street) close family and friends descended from their carriages and were joined by about two hundred and fifty members of the Aberdeen public. They then all walked slowly all the way down Union Street, whilst crowds of people all along the route looked on and paid their last respects to Macdonald. At North Street - at the easternmost end of Union Street, the cortège proceeded by cab to Aberdeen's oldest and most illustrious church, (but one eight miles from Macdonald's home), St Machar's Cathedral in Old Aberdeen. After a short prayer there Macdonald's coffin was lowered into the vault over which a simple but solid sarcophagus of pink granite was later erected.⁶⁶

Such proceedings illustrate clearly the standing in which Macdonald was held by the people of Aberdeen. The elaborate procession and large public show of respect could be accounted for in part by the fact that Macdonald had employed so many of Aberdeen's men in his immensely profitable business. His physical disabilities and untimely death may have added to the sympathy the people felt towards him. Perhaps most importantly, however, was the fact that Macdonald had decreed that the large part of his wealth - in money and in pictures - should be left to the city and its people, for in his will Macdonald had bequeathed all of his pictures to the city, along with a third of the estate. The plan to bequeath his wealth to the city of Aberdeen had no doubt been decided upon after the death of his son. In the remaining six years Macdonald had clearly organised his business affairs with great care and deliberation, and in so doing, was to transform Reid's opinion of him. Macdonald drew up a detailed will which made provision for his wife during her lifetime, but also allowed George Reid to orchestrate the spending of his moneys as directed, for the "direct and purposeful display of his collection in a public space".⁶⁷ Always a good administrator. Reid, as a co-executor, took on the responsibility of making arrangements for the pictures and money and seemed to relish his duties. Here was an opportunity to create for Aberdeen something he and White had sought since their Town Hall exhibition of 1873 - a city Art Gallery. Reid's words regarding Macdonald were transformed overnight;

⁶⁶ George Reid to Mia Reid 31 December 1884.

⁶⁷ Last will and testament of Alexander Macdonald.

The pictures and the fund left will be a most valuable gift to Aberdeen - It is wonderful with how much forethought Macdonald has made all his arrangements about them.⁶⁸

However, since White and he had no doubt been consulted over the arrangements, some self-congratulation may be assumed.

5.8 The Establishment of Aberdeen Art Gallery

The desire to build a public art gallery in Aberdeen had existed for many years. The loan exhibition, held in the Town and County Hall in 1873, had illustrated how a group of individuals could, together, raise money for a single event. Nine years later, this same group - led by John Forbes White and George Reid - set up the Art Gallery and Industrial Museum Committee of Management in the Autumn of 1884, three months before Alexander Macdonald died.

The initial idea, however, had been formulated long before and the first painting donated in 1880. White's closer contacts with Dundee may have spurred him on to set up a building committee in Aberdeen for in 1879 a further extension of galleries had been opened in Dundee to accommodate the growing permanent art collection. In addition annual art exhibitions in Dundee had been held since 1877. They often contained well over a thousand pictures.

The Aberdeen committee decreed that life subscribers paid £10 each, annual subscribers one guinea. The committee had the power to elect members to the Committee which already had various worthies on it comprising a quorum of the Lord Provost, the Lord Lieutenant of the County, the Chairman of the School Board and the convenor of the County of Aberdeen. The committee appointed the Aberdeen architect A. Marshall Mackenzie to design the building, using granite. It opened in 1885.

Initially the gallery was used for the biennial exhibitions of the recently formed Aberdeen Artists Society and for industrial exhibitions, but soon individuals began to donate paintings. Alexander Macdonald had bequeathed his collection, but this remained at Kepplestone with Mrs Macdonald for the remainder of her life. Meanwhile

⁶⁸ George Reid to Mia Reid 1 January 1885. The sarcophagus eventually held the bodies of Macdonald, his wife, Hope Gordon and their only child, Alexander Hope Gordon.

she continued to add to the collection of artists' portraits. The sitters in these portraits include interesting, innovative artists such as Stanhope Forbes, John Singer Sargent and a Scot of Reid's generation, whom Macdonald had never patronised; William McTaggart – one of the most innovative of Robert Scott Lauder's pupils. Whether this was because she was well advised – perhaps by Reid and White – or because Mrs Macdonald was interested in these artists is not known. Certainly she stayed in contact with many of the artists whom Macdonald had befriended; the Hooks stayed with Mrs Macdonald in 1887⁶⁹ and she visited Millais at Birnam on at least one occasion.⁷⁰ She may have met Sargent when he visited Aberdeen – he was a good friend of Joseph Farquharson. Her active and fruitful collecting continued until her own death in 1900, when the pictures were all then transferred to Aberdeen Art Gallery.

The first donation in 1880 of a portrait by Alphonse Legros had established the precept of the Aberdeen collections being international, (which they have remained ever since). It was followed by a second portrait by Legros in 1882, George Reid's donation of his *Death of Savonarola* in 1885, William Bell Scott's gift of a painting by his brother, David Scott *Orestes seized by the Furies* in 1886, the Aberdeen advocate Francis Edmond's gift of a portrait by John Phillip, of the artist and his wife, in 1887. The following year two more important paintings came into the collections, both of which mark a firm change in the collecting taste of Aberdeen's connoisseurs. They were *To Pastures New* by James Guthrie and *Waterlilies* by Willem Roelofs.

In spite of the fact that George Reid now spent much of his time in Edinburgh, through his brother Archy he kept in close touch with all happenings at the new art gallery. On 20th February 1890, for example, he wrote to John Forbes White describing the exhibition in the galleries. He was pleased with the hang, but felt that there was too searching a light on the pictures on the south wall. Only the glass on the south wall had been darkened, while on the north it was clear, so Reid instructed the decorator to darken the glass on the other side.

One of the first exhibitions to be held in the new art gallery was one of Turner drawings, the organisation of which (by White) worried Reid;

⁶⁹ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 7 August 1887.

⁷⁰ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 25 August 1890 (see Appendix A).

I hope you will look well after the safety of the Turner drawings (53 I hear!) when they are under your care. It would be a great pity if anything happened to injure them and in a new building there is always the risk of damp.⁷¹

5.9 Bad Feeling Between John Forbes White And Reid

In 1877 Reid had painted a portrait of John Forbes White,⁷² but this apparent continuation of White's patronage of Reid and close relationship between the two men that they had enjoyed for ten years was beginning to break down. They had differed in their opinion of William Robertson Smith's investigation by The Free Church - Reid regarding White's views as far too liberal.⁷³ In 1881 another problem emerged which was to cause a great deal of bad feeling between White and Reid. This came about through university politics. Reid had accepted a commission to paint a portrait of Professor Baine and this had in some way caused offence with Principal Geddes and as a result John Forbes White, his brother-in-law. In a letter George Reid goes out of his way to explain how he had offended them unwittingly, not having realised that there was any animosity between Geddes and Baine.⁷⁴ Late in 1882 Reid had asked White and Macdonald to lend paintings to an exhibition. Both had refused.⁷⁵ The following year problems again developed in Reid's friendship with White, but this time for political reasons.⁷⁶ Two weeks later Reid's irritation with White was still clear when he wrote to J. Irvine Smith. Reid had finished a set of drawings (probably twelve drawings of scenery on the Great North of Scotland Railway) and was annoyed that White had asked for the pick of them. Instead of being grateful for White's patronage - as he would have been ten years earlier - Reid had come to resent White's assumption that he would have first choice.⁷⁷ With great pleasure he gave the first pick of the drawings to J. Irvine Smith,⁷⁸ then offered White the remainder.⁷⁹

⁷¹ George Reid to John Forbes White. Undated.

⁷² The portrait was exhibited at the Royal Scottish Academy in 1879 (320).

⁷³ George Reid to John Forbes White 4 November 1877.

⁷⁴ George Reid to John Forbes White 27 February 1881 (see Appendix A).

⁷⁵ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 19 November 1882. The paintings were respectively *Feeding Pigeons* by William Quiller Orchardson (GAGM) and Millais' *The Convalescent* (AAG).

⁷⁶ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 15 October 1883 (see Appendix A).

⁷⁷ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 15 October 18 March 1881.

⁷⁸ George Reid to John Forbes White 11 November 1881.

⁷⁹ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 14 December 1881.

Some two years later their differences of opinion, on religious and political matters, were still an irritant and, after making a feeble excuse not to visit White, Reid cautioned him in severe tones;

I am sorry to see your friend Bryce is a desestabloter although from his N.P. origin and radical tendencies I expected it. It grieves me however to think that you, should be found aiding and abetting in the attack upon the church of Scotland. No good will come of it either for the country at large or to yourself individually. You don't know what you are doing.⁸⁰

Throughout this time Reid's links with Aberdeen were becoming more and more tenuous and there seemed the possibility that, like Orchardson and Pettie before him, he too might move to London. His links with Samuel Smiles could draw him there and build resentment against White, as the correspondence between Reid and Smiles at the time perhaps suggests.⁸¹ Certainly there was a distinct cooling of Reid's friendship and intimacy with White at this time.⁸² This may have been in part due to the fact that in 1882 Reid had married a local woman, Mia Best. In November of that year the couple went on an extended honeymoon, to France and Italy. Reid introduced his wife to Jozef Israels at the Salon.⁸³ As he had been in 1876 when travelling through northern Europe with William Robertson Smith, Reid was saddened by the restoration of the churches "I swore although it was a church - I couldn't help it".⁸⁴ They visited Bologna, Ravenna, Florence and Venice, where Reid had ample opportunity to admire the portraits of Titian.⁸⁵ But in Milan Reid was generally disappointed by what he saw.⁸⁶ In Bergamo, however, he admired the Moronis, and in the lakes was reminded of Turner, but, significantly it was increasingly to Irvine Smith, rather than White, that Reid reported his experiences and opinions reached at on the tour.⁸⁷

George Reid's relationship with Chalmers had been very close. He had cajoled and encouraged him and his death had been a great shock. As 1878 drew to a close Reid, quoting Tennyson, expressed his grief in a letter to his friend J. Irvine Smith;

⁸⁰ George Reid to John Forbes White 15 October 1885.

⁸¹ Samuel Smiles to George Reid 1 October 1878 (see Appendix A).

⁸² George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 7 August 1887 (see Appendix A).

⁸³ Jozef Israels to George Reid 12 November 1883.

⁸⁴ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 26 April 1883 (see Appendix A).

⁸⁵ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 8 May 1883 (see Appendix A).

⁸⁶ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 26 April 1883.

⁸⁷ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 8 May 1883 (see Appendix A).

In another 4 hours 1878 will be dead and gone! Gladness and sadness have largely mingled, the latter much predominating. I long for "the touch of the vanished hand and the sound of a voice that is still". How soon memory begins to fade! 1878 will ever be to me a memorable year, not for what has been but for what has been lost.⁸⁸

It was, in effect, the end of an era, not only because of the death of Chalmers, but also because the close relationship which Reid and White had shared was disintegrating. On 28th October 1883 a small memorial window was placed in Craigiebuckler Church, Aberdeen. It was paid for by Reid, who selected a design by Edward Burne-Jones from Morris & Co. Daniel Cottier was still active in the field but Reid seemed determined to follow a new path - as far removed from John Forbes White and his friends as possible. Reid showed his most important portraits in London at The Royal Academy, where they hung alongside those of John Everett Millais, J.C. Hook and Frank Holl. He was becoming ever more involved with the Royal Scottish Academy and his portrait commissions. Stylistically his other work - especially landscape painting - was not progressing as much as White might have wished. This led White to court a new generation of artists, who were as adventurous as he was, and to help them as he had once helped George Reid and George Paul Chalmers.

The links forged in London during the 1870s, however, meant that White's influence - as collector, connoisseur and critic - reached far further than might otherwise have been the case. Individually White and Reid engineered many introductions - Millais met Israels, as, for example, did McTaggart.

The decade began with dissension and rebellion with a diatribe against the art establishment in the "*Veri Vindex*" article. Landscape and portraiture - not just in Scotland but, through Millais and Hook in England too - changed fundamentally, with the principles of European Realism and Hague School and Barbizon theories introduced, very often through Scottish intermediaries. The decade ended, however, with the virtual disintegration of the relationship of Reid and White, its fruitful symbiosis lost for ever. While Reid pursued a career in portraiture and administration White replaced his former protégés - Reid and Chalmers - with a younger generation

⁸⁸ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 31 December 1878. My thanks to Duncan Macmillan for identifying the quotation.

of artists, who combined a knowledge of their Scottish forbears with a thorough grounding in and understanding of contemporary art.

CHAPTER 6

John Forbes White and a New Generation of Artists 1880-1888

6.1. White's collecting 1880-1888 - Willem Roelofs

John Forbes White continued to buy foreign art and, as that art changed, so his collecting came to reflect these changes. Very early in the decade, for example, he bought a newly-completed painting by Mollinger's master, Willem Roelofs (1822-1897). This painting, *Waterlilies* (AAG pl. 67) was very different from Roelofs's earlier work - a large, ambitious landscape which, with its high horizon, emphasis on the horizontal and bright, but tonally similar colours, was stylistically very modern. Early in his career Roelofs had visited Fontainebleau and his landscape paintings of the 1860s illustrate very clearly his assimilation of the influence of the Barbizon School, with dramatic contrasts of light and shade which recall the work of Rousseau and Diaz. These influences may well have been evident in his *Canal at Schiedam* (untraced) which was in the possession of White by 1867, five years before Roelofs visited Scotland.¹ By the time Roelofs painted *Waterlilies*, however, such tonal contrasts had disappeared from his work, and had been replaced by an overall lucidity and brightness, qualities which were, within a very few years, to characterise the most innovative paintings of the younger Scottish School.

Although Dutch, Roelofs had lived and worked in Brussels since 1847. He spent the summers in The Netherlands, however, and the lake of Noorden was a favoured spot, providing the subject for White's painting. One thing that characterised the work of Roelofs, throughout his long career, was his preference for apparently insignificant subjects. He was noted for his ability to make an interesting composition from an unremarkable scene, an achievement that was made possible by his deep understanding of, and interest in, nature. His pupil Smitsaert recalled how his master

¹ Roelofs had visited Scotland in 1872, when he spent several months on the Isle of Skye. There is no firm evidence that Roelofs met White or visited him in Aberdeen at this time but, given the close relationship between Mollinger, White and Reid, it is not impossible that he did. White was corresponding with Roelofs, and in a letter dated 17 February 1867 (in possession of the author) Roelofs described the location of *Canal at Schiedam* to White, his wife having purchased it for his birthday one month earlier, on 11 January 1867.

could assimilate this knowledge and produce such memorable paintings;

You need to know nature through daily contact, as he does, in order, like him, to enjoy it to the full. What you and I heedlessly pass by as insignificant or ugly, he stands, and contemplates in quiet delight, and while you are wondering what there is to be seen, his poet's soul will have absorbed the poetry of this abandoned spot and he will represent it for you just as it struck him.²

Roelofs was a keen entomologist. He had sold his collection of insects in 1880 but the precisely rendered dragonflies in the foreground of this painting recall this interest. His use of soft, natural lighting and the absence of anecdote or sentimentality characterise his work and no doubt appealed to White. Another version of the painting (P.A. Sheen Gallery) though without any human presence, nevertheless lacks the bleakness of this work. For White the relative bleakness, or rather simplicity and lack of anecdotal detail, of the painting was a positive advantage. It joined his collection early in the 1880s, very soon after it was painted, and, being very large, was probably hung in the painting gallery at the back of White's town house on Union Street rather than at Seaton Cottage.

Throughout the early 1880s John Forbes White continued to acquire innovative and important paintings but, with the exception of *Waterlilies*, his attentions were increasingly directed towards a new generation of young British artists whose paintings exemplified all that he admired in art.³ These artists had recently been to France and understood the principles of modern European painting, the precepts that White had been outlining in his writings since the early 1870s. They had trained with Carolus Duran, Gérôme and Julian in Paris and had mixed with other British and American artists at Grez-sur-Loing. They knew and admired the work of J.F. Millet, Jules Bastien-Lepage and Jules Breton. White eagerly purchased the very first paintings they exhibited and, following up his purchases by meeting the artists as was his wont, came to replace his earlier close artistic comrades - including Reid and Israels - with younger

² H. Smissaert *Het Schildersboek* vol. 1 Amsterdam 1898 p 79.

³ It is interesting to compare White's collecting at this date with that of James Staats Forbes, who was now buying Jozef Israels' most important paintings. Israels was now famous but Forbes, who always bought speculatively, hoping for a profit when he sold his paintings (as he did frequently) clearly perceived that a profit might be made. See Dekkers, *Jozef Israels 1824-1911* Groningen 1999 pp 33, 105 & 109.

men, who could benefit from his patronage (which Reid and Israels no longer needed)⁴ whilst he in turn could charm these younger men and enjoy their admiration of him. He took great pleasure in entertaining them at Seaton Cottage and explaining to them the subtleties of his collection. There they could leaf through his early photographs, read the articles that he had written and listen to his beliefs on art, (Charles Keene's description of Seaton Cottage as a "little Eden" confirms the obvious pleasure artists derived from their sojourns there).⁵ Clearly White was persuasive and successful in his endeavours to attract young artists to his "court" and for them to be moved by the experience, as is illustrated by the description of the visit to Seaton of the next artist whom he chose to befriend, William Stott of Oldham (1857-1900).

6.2. William Stott of Oldham

It is not known for certain exactly when or how White became acquainted with William Stott of Oldham. White had recently bought Stott's finest painting, *Le Passeur* or *The Ferryman*⁶ (Private collection pl. 68) from the Paris Salon where it had been exhibited that Spring. In the summer of 1882 Stott took up White's invitation to spend several weeks at Seaton Cottage, painting a full-length portrait of White's eldest daughter, Alice (Private collection pl. 69). Stott depicts Alice wearing a tightly-fitting, pale blue dress. She is playing her violin and standing in front of an upright piano, on which are prominently displayed two oriental vases. These still life elements, as well as the general composition and dreamy mood of the painting, all recall the work of Whistler, whom both Stott and White admired greatly, and in particular his *Symphony in White No 2: The Little White Girl* of 1864 (Tate Gallery). The presence of the piano might also have recalled Whistler's earlier *At the Piano* (Taft Museum, Cincinnati), which the Aberdeen artist John Phillip had once owned and with which, it may be assumed (since Phillip and White moved in the same circles),

⁴ Israels was selling less than he had in The Netherlands but throughout the 1870s more in England (mainly due to the benefaction of James Staats Forbes) and from the 1880s, in the United States of America and Canada. Israels' Salon pieces, such as *The Sleepers* which Macdonald would have paid around 3,600 guilders for in 1868 were, by the end of the 1870s, selling for 10,000 guilders. See Dekkers *Jozef Israels 1824-1911* Groningen 1999 p 105.

⁵ Ina Mary Harrower *John Forbes White* Edinburgh 1918 p 72.

⁶ The painting has often since been erroneously titled *The Ferry*.

White was familiar. The once silver-gilt oak frame of the painting (pl. 70) is highly unusual, being decorated with large spherical pegs. Melville used a similar frame for his *Henley Regatta by Night* (Private collection) of 1889 and may well have had the idea to do so when seeing Alice's portrait when it was exhibited in Oldham in 1883, at the Salon in 1886 or at Stott's one-man show at Durand-Ruel in 1889. Just as likely is the possibility that he saw the painting in Aberdeen on one of his visits to the White family, particularly when he is known to have had some of his frames made in Aberdeen.⁷ It may also have influenced his decision to depict Miss Margerison seated at a piano, in his famous painting, *The White Piano* of 1892 (Harris Museum & Art Gallery, Preston).

For Stott Seaton Cottage - and its idyllic environs - proved to be both a haven of artistic delight and inspirational for his art; "Do you know that the six weeks with you at Seaton Cottage", he wrote to White with great emotion, "are quite the prettiest six weeks of my life - will they ever come again? They must. I cannot, will not believe that such Eldorado days are gone forever".⁸

Over the next year Stott wrote often to White, describing his life in Paris, his attempts to exhibit his work and his struggles to follow his wish to remain a professional artist. As this correspondence makes very clear, the relationship was far closer than merely one of a patron and artist, but had become a true friendship.

R.A.M. Stevenson, in his rather odd article on Stott (in which he extols the artist's later bizarre and near-pornographic paintings such as *The Awakening of the Spirit of the Rose*), states that Stott exhibited *Le Passeur* at the Paris Salon in 1881.⁹ In fact, (as McConkey correctly relates)¹⁰ it was in the following Spring that Stott exhibited at the Salon *Le Passeur* and *La Baignade* (Staatsgemaldegammlungen, Munich). Stott had exhibited two paintings at the Salon in 1881, but they were a Corot-sounding *La Rêve du Midi* and an evidently more anecdotal *La Tricoteuse*.

⁷ See Jacob Simon "Picture Framing - A Note on Arthur Melville (1855-1904) and His Picture Frames" *Museum Management and Curatorship* Vol. 16 No 4 December 1997 (Published January 1999) p 431.

⁸ Ina Mary Harrower *John Forbes White* Edinburgh 1918 p 73.

⁹ R.A.M. Stevenson "William Stott of Oldham" *The Studio* Vol. IV No 19 October 1894 p 10.

¹⁰ Kenneth McConkey *Impressionism in Britain* Yale University Press 1995 p 22.

Perhaps White may have seen these paintings at the Salon that year but it was *Le Passeur* which exemplified for White the quality and worth of Stott's art.

In Aberdeen Stott could admire White's collection of paintings and perhaps particularly Mason's *Derbyshire Landscape* (pl. 11) which resembled his own *Le Passeur* so closely. In both works the canvas is exactly twice as wide as it is high. Stott's painting also has a line of houses running along the horizon, albeit with red roofs rather than blue slate. White had been struck by this compositional device and noted of *A Landscape, Derbyshire*, "a line of farmhouses lies on a slope in the middle distance, behind which is the deep splendour of the sun which has set".¹¹ White, it will be remembered, had also remarked on how Mason favoured evening. "A favourite hour of the day with him is the evening" he wrote, "'between sun and moon", when the end of the day and the day's toil is full of charm both as to colour and pathos".¹² White continued "It is somewhat strange that with this sentiment of labour done and rest well earned, associated with the light of the dying day, Mason should *invariably* have chosen to combine the loves and pleasures of young people. Never once does he fall into what would seem the more natural association of twilight and old age [as had Chalmers]. There is.....a restrained, measured dignity about these rustics, an almost statuesque absence of expression in emotion".¹³ Stott too, in *Le Passeur*, had depicted the glow of early evening light and two children, still and statuesque, contemplating the landscape. "Mason was an ideal painter", wrote White, "but it was an ideal founded on the possible and the actual".¹⁴ Such realism also typified *Le Passeur* as did the way both artists "...combined [a] wonderful feeling for the balance between light and dark, warm and cold, tones, which are fused and interwoven together till the picture becomes one harmonious whole".¹⁵

McConkey and others have quite rightly pointed out the influence of contemporary photography on Stott and his fellow "British Impressionists".¹⁶ The languorous effect of *Le Passeur* bears more than a passing likeness to White's poetic

¹¹ John Forbes White "The Pictures of the late George Mason ARA" *The Contemporary Review* April 1873 p 730.

¹² *Ibid.* p 728.

¹³ *Ibid.* p 728-9.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p 728-9.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* pp 729-30.

salt prints of Seaton Cottage and the stretch of the river Don flowing before it. In its tonality Stott's painting recalls the soft effects created in these photographs. In *Le Passeur* Stott depicts a landscape seen reflected in water and viewed through trees. This was a compositional device favoured by Mason, as in his *Jack Pond near Esher* (Private Collection) but was also popular in photography.¹⁷ White too had favoured landscapes reflected in still waters when photographing Seaton, as in *On the Don, Old Aberdeen, near Balgownie, Old Aberdeen, Banks of the Don at the Brig o' Balgownie* or *The Mill at Old Aberdeen* (AAG pl. 71).

At the time Stott visited Seaton Cottage a small ferry was commonly employed to transport the mill workers and the White family and their guests across the river (even today a privately owned flimsy, metal bridge is the only method of crossing anywhere near that point). Reid often used the ferry and refers to it in his correspondence with White.

Stott had been at Grez-sur-Loing and had been deeply influenced by the Barbizon artists who had also had a powerful effect on Hague School artists. The long horizontal formats, simple subject matter and lack of anecdote was common there too - particularly in the work of Jacob Maris and Charles-François Daubigny. In Aberdeen all of these sources combined, and many more besides. Seaton Cottage and its garden was indeed an "Eldorado", and could almost have been the model for *Le Passeur* so closely did it resemble its subject. With its slow-moving river, its ferry, its trees reflected in the water, its adolescent girls (Alice, Rachel and Ina White) who were well used to modelling for their father's artist-friends,¹⁸ its library with an article on Mason written by White, its collection of magnificent paintings by Barbizon and Hague School artists and White's own exquisite photographs it must indeed have seemed like an Eldorado - his vision made real - for an impressionable young artist like William Stott.

R.A.M. Stevenson points out how Stott rose quickly, from a completely untrained artist in his early twenties arriving in Paris and at Gérôme's studio, quickly to "understand the perfect finish of Velasquez, the incomparable elegance of Whistler, the

¹⁶ Kenneth McConkey *op. cit.* pp 51-2.

¹⁷ Mason also based many scenes on photographs. See Rosalind Billingham, *George Heming Mason* Stoke on Trent Museum and Art Gallery 1982.

¹⁸ See Plates 12, 13, 23 & 24.

softness of surface, the completed beauty of Corot, the subtle glow, the decorative magnificence of Titian"¹⁹ - in short to admire all the artists whom White had been championing for the last twenty years and to paint as White advocated.

Though separated by thirty years in age here were two men whose ideals in art were very similar, both men, for example, sharing a deep admiration for the work of James McNeill Whistler. Stott could supply White with a painting which echoed exactly his tastes in art; a fresh, unmannered picture, with little narrative content (though not entirely without symbolism). It followed all of White's desired precepts of capturing both the impression of the moment and, as he liked to put it, clear truth.

Whilst it might have seemed that Aberdeen might be a bad place for such a painting to find a home, the home it found was often visited by young artists. White also willingly lent the painting, to Oldham in 1883 and to Stott's one-man show at Durand Ruel in 1889. Many artists became familiar with the painting and with White's help *Le Passeur* was to prove to be a seminal precursor of a type. The same pairing of children, one standing, one sitting in a landscape setting is repeated by numerous Scottish artists, including William Kennedy, in *Spring* 1884 (Renfrew District Museum & Art Gallery, Paisley), James Guthrie, in *In the Orchard* (1885-6) (Private Collection), Thomas Corsan Morton in *The Duckpond* c1885 (coll. Angus Maclean) and George Reid in *Montrose* of 1888 (AAG pl. 13).

6.3. John Lavery

Caw and Billcliffe have pointed out how influential Stott was on the "Glasgow Boys" though for Caw only *La Baignade*, he believed, was an influence, since it alone had been exhibited in Glasgow.²⁰ *Le Passeur*, however, is the key picture in the development of Realist painting in Scotland, since it alone foretells Lavery's masterful series of paintings of the bridge at Grez of c.1884 and his transposition of the style and subject acquired at Grez to a Scottish setting; as in *The Tennis Party* (AAG pl. 72) of one year later. Lavery's sketch for this painting (Private Collection) follows the advice

¹⁹ R.A.M. Stevenson "William Stott of Oldham" *The Studio* Vol. IV No 19 October 1894 p 4.

²⁰ James L. Caw *Sir James Guthrie PRSA* London 1932 p 21 & Roger Billcliffe *The Glasgow Boys* London 1985 p 37.

that he had received from Bastien-Lepage; to capture the essence of movement, spontaneously, after only once glance at a figure²¹ but the finished painting owes far more to Stott than to Bastien-Lepage. The action of the tennis party is boldly juxtaposed with a palpable sense of stillness, created by the smoke rising from the young man's pipe and more clearly by the girl who watches the scene - her pose recalling that of the standing girl in *Le Passeur*. She too observes what is to come - her adulthood heralded by the partners playing tennis in the same way that it is suggested, more subtly, in Stott's painting, by the ferryman who is about to come across the river towards the standing girl.

By allowing artists access to *Le Passeur* White influenced the development of the art of Lavery and several other young Scottish painters, for whom contact with Stott was to prove critical. It is not surprising, in the light of these influences, to find that White was also an admirer of Lavery. He wrote an article on him for *The Quarterly Review* in 1891 and recommended his work to George Reid who shared his enthusiasm.²²

6.4. James Guthrie and "A Funeral Service in the Highlands"

The same year that Stott painted *Le Passeur* James Guthrie completed his first major painting, *A Funeral Service in the Highlands* (GMAG pl. 73). It was accepted to hang at the Royal Academy that year, but did not sell. In Glasgow, at the Royal Glasgow Institute the following year Guthrie priced the painting at £210. No Glasgow collector bought it, nor yet any one of the several dealers who had established businesses in that city. Instead John Forbes White purchased the painting and followed this up by becoming acquainted with the young artist, visiting him at Cockburnspath, where, significantly, Arthur Melville was also based at the time, and also, probably, inviting him to Aberdeen.

The painting's deep pathos, strong tonal contrasts, subdued colours and extremely limited tonal range were all assets to White (as they clearly were to Arthur Melville, who asked to be introduced to Guthrie after seeing this painting). This dark

²¹ John Lavery *Life of a Painter* London 1940 p 57.

²² George Reid to John Forbes White 7 October 1888 (see Appendix A).

tonality and the subject matter may have deterred London and Glasgow buyers. White, on the other hand, well used to Dutch Hague School painting, did not shrink away from such bleak and sombre realism but conversely saw in it the influence of past and present Dutch and French Art and was, consequently, immensely attracted to it. A large picture, measuring 129.5 x 193 cm, it too had joined Roelofs' *Waterlilies* in White's private gallery, built by Cottier at the back of his Union Street home, by the summer of 1883.

A Funeral Service in the Highlands may have reminded White of the sketch his friend Jozef Israels had made of a Highland funeral when he had travelled down Deeside with White, G.P. Chalmers and Hugh Cameron in 1870. He may also have perceived it to be a Scottish version of Israels' famous *Fishermen Carrying a Drowned Man*, which he had first seen at the International Exhibition in London in 1862. At the fore of the artistic connections White could make with this painting, however, would surely have been Gustave Courbet's *Burial at Ornans* of 1849-50 (Musée d'Orsay, Paris), a source which may well have influenced Guthrie to execute this painting which, though a very Presbyterian view of events, nevertheless shares with Courbet's painting a deep solemnity and dignity as well as a similar, frieze-like composition and dark tonality.²³

6.5. James Guthrie - "To Pastures New"

In 1883 Guthrie painted another picture which, for other reasons, was just as novel in terms of Scottish art as *A Funeral in the Highlands*. *To Pastures New* (AAG pl. 74) depicts a young girl driving geese across a flat and uninteresting landscape. Guthrie purposefully selected the landscape of Lincolnshire for his painting - as Reid was to select the Montrose basin - it being as flat a landscape as he could find. This allowed him to lower the horizon to two-thirds of the way down the canvas (quite at variance with Bastien-Lepage, who favoured a very high horizon) and use the monochromatic grey-blue sky as a backdrop for the processional scene. Both Jacob and Willem Maris painted landscapes where the horizon cut the composition at this

²³ Courbet's *Funeral at Ornans* was readily accessible - it had been exhibited at the Salon in 1881 and entered the Louvre the following year.

point, recalling of course the art of Dutch 17th century masters, particularly Rembrandt. Guthrie's novel approach, however, was in combining this unusual background format with figures seen very close up (as Bastien-Lepage and Courbet preferred), setting these figures - one girl and several geese - on the frontal plane of the picture and accentuating their movement to the left by positioning the girl some way into the picture and cutting off half of the goose furthest to the left. The procession of the girl driving the geese recalls more than any other painting one by Jozef Israels, *Old Man and Sheep* (untraced) which was included in the 1873 Aberdeen Exhibition (and is marked with an "x" on pl. 33) and was in all probability still in Aberdeen ten years later. The figure composition, subject of the painting and its title are remarkably like Anton Mauve's *To Pastures New* (untraced pl. 75) which, on stylistic grounds, can be dated to the second half of the 1870s and may have been in Scotland very soon afterwards; it was in the collection of the Aberdonian Sir James Murray (1850-1933). A similar subject and format was also employed by J.F. Millet for his *Femme faisant paître sa vache* of 1858 (Musée e de Brou, Bourg en Bresse). Although the subject matter and composition is quite different, the pale colours and overall tone of Guthrie's painting are close to Roelofs' *Waterlilies*. Guthrie had darkened *A Funeral in the Highlands* on the advice of E.A. Walton.²⁴ The possibility exists that he decided on both the theme and the much lighter key for this painting after having seen Roelofs' *Waterlilies* - which it resembles so closely in size, tone and lucidity - and also possibly several other paintings by French and Dutch masters in Aberdeen.

Like the funeral picture, *To Pastures New* was completed in John G. Whyte's Helensburgh studio²⁵ and indeed may well have been intended to adorn that home permanently. Whyte certainly ended up with a smaller version of the picture but once again the large painting came to Aberdeen. Guthrie's *To Pastures New* is an easier picture in terms of colour and subject matter than *A Funeral in the Highlands*, but it was perhaps still difficult in terms of the strange compositional devises of the large expanse to the right and the crowding to the left (which suggests movement so expertly), the impoverished appearance of the girl, her face half hidden and without the

²⁴ See Sir James L. Caw *Sir James Guthrie PRSA LLD* London 1932 p 16.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

more normal eye contact with the viewer which would break her isolation.²⁶ Perhaps these factors deterred Whyte from buying the painting or indeed any other west coast collectors. *To Pastures New* was exhibited in Glasgow but, as with Guthrie's previous painting, was bought by an Aberdonian.

Given White's bold purchase of *A Funeral Service in the Highlands* it might have seemed likely that it was he who encouraged the Aberdeen advocate Francis Edmond (died 1892) to buy *To Pastures New*. Up until then Edmond's collecting had been somewhat conservative - this painting was a radical change from his earlier choices (he had lent anecdotal work by Herdman, MacCulloch, and Erskine Nicol to the Aberdeen Exhibition of 1873). That White did indeed encourage Edmond is confirmed by a letter to the widow of E.A. Walton from a P.I. or P.J. Blair, of 15 Kensington Gate, Glasgow who wrote to her on 1 February 1924;

Guthrie's first picture "The Goose Girl", à la Bastien Lepage, went to Aberdeen at John Forbes White's instigation. He always regretted not having bought it himself, but he had just gone a "buster" as he thought at the time, £800 for the Corot "Dance des Nymphes" in the Corporation Galleries here, worth now what? £30,000 or £40,000! His shade, I hope in Heaven, may well say Corraggio, mio.²⁷

In fact White's inability to purchase the painting could not be attributed to his purchase of works by Corot - since he had bought them some ten years earlier. His pecuniary position was caused by more recent acquisitions - Roelofs' *Waterlilies*, Guthrie's *A Funeral in the Highlands* but also problems with his business, which were, over the next few years, to become extremely serious. In the same letter Mr Blair hints at White's influence, not only on Edmond, but on himself and reveals the part White had to play in promoting the work of Guthrie and several other artists besides;

Any little art knowledge I possess was got under the great connoisseur John Forbes White of Aberdeen, one of the first to pick out the Glasgow School. "Watch those boys" he used to tell me - & the first Glasgow School I bought was this little thing by your husband - when I was a law student in Edinburgh with very few shillings to spend. John Forbes White admired it greatly - so did

²⁶ Duncan Macmillan has suggested convincingly (in conversation with the author) that this device - of working headgear set at an oblique angle thus obscuring much of the face - may well have been borrowed from Melville, see his *Paysanne at Grez* of 1880 (Private Collection).

²⁷ Walton MSS (National Library of Scotland, MS 19245 Fos 75-77). I am indebted to Helen Smailes for pointing out this reference to me.

Sir James Guthrie -, an old friend of mine, who if he hadn't been a great preordained painter and P.R.S.A. would undoubtedly have been a colleague of mine at the Scottish Bar, and by now a great Judge.²⁸

White did indeed continue to promote the work of several young artists whom he admired. Both he and Reid were very enthusiastic about the influence of French art on British artists which, by 1887, had even reached the portals of the Royal Academy; "The RA is good this year" wrote Reid to White, "a lot of excellent work by new men. French training very apparent in much of it - In another ten years there will be a great change in the English School of Painting."²⁹

6.6. The "Glasgow Boys"

In 1884 James Guthrie settled in Cockburnspath for a few years, and John Forbes White visited him there.³⁰ It may have been at Cockburnspath that White first met Arthur Melville (1858-1904). He went on to commission several works from him, including a study of his wife in watercolours, seated in this elegant room, holding a Japanese style fan of peacock feathers³¹ and full-length portraits of three of his children, some time during the first half of the 1890s, but long before that Melville had stayed at Seaton Cottage and had fond memories of it.³² Clearly White admired Melville and made his appreciation known to Reid, who evidently agreed with him, writing to White, "Arthur Melville has some good things, one of his watercolours - Kirkwall fair very clever.....he is a true artist and it is refreshing to come upon his work."³³ Clearly Melville had admired Guthrie enough to request meeting him. Melville's acquaintance with White and his seeing his collection, may well have affected his art - his painting *Waterlilies* (Andrew McIntosh Patrick), for example, could easily have been inspired by White's painting by Roelofs. He exhibited his own *Funeral Service in an Orcadian Cottage*, which might have been inspired by Guthrie's

²⁸ Walton MSS *op. cit.*

²⁹ George Reid to John Forbes White 16 May 1887.

³⁰ James L. Caw Sir James Guthrie PRSA LLD London 1932 p 24.

³¹ This watercolour is still in the possession of White's family. It was given by Melville to White's eldest daughter, Alice, on the occasion of her 17th birthday and is inscribed: *To Alice On her birthday A.M. 1892*: It was not included in Agnes McKay's catalogue of pictures by Arthur Melville, though she herself admits that her list is not complete. See Agnes McKay Arthur Melville Scottish Impressionist 1855-1904 Leigh-on-Sea 1951 pl. 23.

³² Ina Mary Harrower John Forbes White Edinburgh 1918 p 56.

³³ George Reid to John Forbes White 9 February 1886.

funeral painting, at the Royal Scottish Academy in 1887. Melville's work reveals his admiration of Manet, Whistler and Velasquez. Whether this was something that he shared with White through coincidence or whether White had brought him to such an appreciation, remains an intriguing mystery.

Reid also admired the work of Alexander Mann (1853-1908), writing to White, "I send you herewith "The Golden Vanitie" illustrated by Mr Mann, a Glasgow artist, a friend of Archie's. Many of the sketches are exceedingly clever".³⁴ Mann had studied in Paris at the Atelier Julian in 1877 (one year earlier than Archy Reid) and with Carolus Duran from 1881-1885. In 1881 he was at Stonehaven and the following year in Forvie, on the coast north of Aberdeen, which provided the subject matter for *Idling on the Sands, Forvie* (AAG pl. 76). The subject and composition of this painting recalls Archy Reid's *On the Bents, Aberdeen* (pl. 32) and it shows the close ties between these two artists. The relatively light tones and horizontal format of the painting also suggest the influence of The Hague School artists rather than their French counterparts.

Caw's championing of Guthrie in 1932 led him to fabricate much of what the "Glasgow Boys" were supposedly up against. He ascribes the battle to introduce modern art movements to Scotland as being fought solely by Guthrie and them.³⁵ Their work, he wrote, was opposed to the artistic ideals of the Royal Scottish Academy where a "superficial realism of niggling detail and conventional naturalism of representation in landscape, and, to a great extent, anecdotal and literary tendencies in subject, expressed without gusto and often without conviction, were in the ascendant."³⁶ In fact, largely because of White and Reid, they were in the descendent - and had been for almost a decade. Caw describes how the Royal Scottish Academy was "impossibly conventional and hide-bound" and was "only interested in itself and Edinburgh".³⁷ With George Reid increasingly in a position of power there, nothing could be farther from the truth. Caw's belief in the Academy's disapproval of Guthrie and his friends is a myth. In fact the work of these artists was accepted to hang, both at

³⁴ George Reid to John Forbes White. Undated but c.1884-5.

³⁵ James L. Caw *Sir James Guthrie PRSA LLD* London 1932 p 29.

³⁶ Caw *op. cit.* p 24.

³⁷ Caw *op. cit.* p 32.

the Royal Academy and indeed in Aberdeen, where these artists had some of their most faithful supporters. Furthermore these young artists were elected to the Royal Scottish Academy at roughly the same stage of their careers as Reid and his contemporaries had been - on average being elected associates at the age of twenty-nine. It is ironic that Reid - according to Caw their forsworn enemy - was in fact their great champion (though admittedly, his dogmatic outbursts in later life, which were often misinterpreted, might have suggested otherwise).

6.7. The Aberdeen Artists Society

No major exhibition had taken place in Aberdeen since 1873 but in 1881 a group of local artists came together in an attempt to repeat the scale and quality of the Town and County Hall exhibition of 1873, organising a large exhibition, once again in the Town and County Buildings. The exhibition ran through July, August and September and was supported by thirty-five honorary patrons; the wealthy businessmen of the city. They included Francis Edmond, the Ogston brothers, James Walker and the photographer George Washington Wilson, whilst the executive committee included local artists Sam Reid, Alexander Mackenzie, Thomas Bunting, J. P. Fraser, G. R. Gowans, John Mitchell and George Sherwood Hunter. Apart from a collection of paintings by John Phillip, which had been borrowed for the occasion, these minor artists supplied the bulk of the professional work. As a result, compared to the 1873 exhibition, which had been organised by White and Reid, the 1881 display of 386 items was a somewhat parochial display with few, if any, important works included and little borrowed from outside the Aberdeen area.

The death of Alexander Macdonald at the end of 1884, however, brought about a change of events in Aberdeen, as in his will he had made provision for a gallery to be built in which to house his collection of paintings and sculpture which he had bequeathed to the city. He also specified that the building should be finished within three years of the date of his death. Even before Macdonald's death building had begun but now, with Macdonald's money available, work proceeded apace and only six months later the building was complete. Macdonald, however, had left his collection in

perpetuity to his wife (who did not die until 1900) and consequently Aberdeen had a grand civic art gallery but hardly any paintings to exhibit in it.

One of the very first loans to the Art Gallery had been the collection of drawings by J.M.W. Turner but drawings were dwarfed by the building and, in order to fill the galleries, White and George and Archy Reid, along with many of the artists who had organised the 1881 Fine Art Exhibition, set about reviving the Aberdeen Artists' Society Exhibitions, which had been moribund for over fifty years.³⁸

As Honorary President, White's first move was to establish the dates of the exhibition so that it would cover the summer months, thus allowing artists to show both there and in Edinburgh and Glasgow. The summer months would also, he believed, be better for visitor figures.³⁹

The first exhibition of the Society contained 727 exhibits, including paintings, drawings, prints, sculpture and applied arts. George Reid had to return to Aberdeen at the beginning of July, as he had a commission to paint a provostal portrait. This visit also allowed him to view the Exhibition of which he wrote to his wife, in his typically conservative way; "It is a very good little exhibition some competent work in it and very well hung."⁴⁰ Such faint praise gives no indication of the quality of the work on view, which was, in fact, remarkable. Archy Reid, who was always less busy than his brother, organised the practical aspects of the exhibition⁴¹ but White was the guiding force and through his contacts the exhibition, in both size and standard, towered above the previous one. The catalogue cover boldly declared it to be an exhibition of Modern Artists and this it proved to be. Given the close ties of friendship between numerous younger artists and Archy Reid and John Forbes White, it is hardly surprising that when these men set about creating an exhibiting society for Aberdeen Guthrie, Lavery, Mann and Melville should have been included in their plans.

Almost all of the so-called Glasgow Boys sent work. James Paterson sent a watercolour, *On the Thames Richmond*, E.A. Walton exhibited several works,

³⁸ In 1827 an Aberdeen Artists Society had been formed, with James Giles as President. The first exhibition, containing some two hundred and forty works, opened in August 1828. It was followed by another in September 1829. However it soon became moribund due to lack of funds and enthusiasm.

³⁹ George Reid to John Forbes White 23 March 1885 (see Appendix A).

⁴⁰ George Reid to Mia Reid 7 July 1885.

⁴¹ George Reid to Mia Reid 6 July 1885 (see Appendix A).

including two views of Stonehaven, as did his sister Constance. Another Glasgow lady artist, Frieda Röhl, who in 1882 had become the first President of the Glasgow Society of Lady Artists, exhibited *In the Fields*. Arthur Melville lent both *Laban and his Flocks* and *Achmet*, William Kennedy *Study of a Head*, T. Millie Dow three works, Alexander Mann four, probably including *Idling on the Sands*, *Forvie* (as *On the Sand Hills*). Mann had also probably exhibited the painting at The Royal Glasgow Institute the year it was painted as *On the Links, Forvie*. If so, priced at £80, it failed to find a buyer and was still with the artist two years later, when he exhibited it at the Royal Academy. It seems very likely that it was purchased from the Aberdeen exhibition by relatives of Mrs Julia Doak, who bequeathed it to Aberdeen Art Gallery in 1944. Intriguingly Mann also showed a work entitled *An Art Critic*, which had first been exhibited at the Royal Glasgow Institute in 1883, the year that Mann had been in north-east Scotland, which leaves the strong possibility that the critic might have been White.

White lent Guthrie's *A Funeral in the Highlands* and Guthrie himself, perhaps realising that his principal patrons were in Aberdeen, exhibited (for the first time) his recently completed *Schoolmates* (Musée des Beaux Arts, Ghent). W.Y. Macgregor lent *Balcombie Sands, Fife* which had been painted that year and John Lavery *Early Morning, A Visitor, On the Loinge[sic], An Afternoon Chat* and *Bridge at Grez*, the last of which had been exhibited at the Royal Glasgow Institute earlier that year, where it was priced at £25 but like Guthrie's paintings, (and Mann's), failed to sell there, thus making it available for an Aberdeen showing.

White secured the loan of W.W. Ouless' portrait of W.E. Gladstone and also a portrait by John Singer Sargent. From the English artists whom he personally admired rather more were included: Frank O'Meara's *Reverie*, George Clausen's *Over the Hill*, two oil paintings by Alfred Parsons and several works, both in oil and watercolour, by Clara and Hilda Montalba.

Local artists were represented with what White believed were their most interesting paintings, White, for example, eschewing Archy Reid's more narrative work and selecting instead the paintings most influenced by Jozef Israels (and the one most

likely to have inspired Mann's *Idling on the Sands, Forvie*), *On the Sands*, which White lent himself and also *Mending Nets*.

James Guthrie came to Aberdeen for the opening. He dined with George Reid at St Lukes a few days later⁴² and, after dinner went with Archy Reid and James Cadenhead to view Macdonald's pictures at Kepplestone.⁴³ It is an indication of how highly Guthrie was already regarded in Aberdeen by this date that when White, as Honorary President of the Society, was photographed with the Executive Committee, Guthrie was included in the centre of the group, seated to White's left (pl. 77).

The opening of the exhibition was reviewed in local newspapers, but initially the attendance figures were dismal. "Archy has just come out from town" wrote Reid to his wife Mia, "He looked in at the Exhibition in the forenoon and there were eleven people in it and again in the afternoon when he found one solitary visitor! It is to be hoped that the people of Aberdeen will turn out better bye and bye, if not he says the whole Artists Society will have to "bolt" as they will not be able to meet their liabilities."⁴⁴ In spite of the quality of the exhibits the exhibition did not receive the attention that White and Reid had hoped it would and Reid commiserated with White, writing to him;

It is a great disappointment after all your trouble to find the people of Aberdeen so indifferent to the merits of the exhibition in the Art Gallery. It requires a different kind of attraction to bring them out.⁴⁵

To his relief visitor numbers improved - especially in the evenings - and Archy could report £11 taken at the door on Wednesday 8th and £10 on Thursday 9th, figures which meant that the Exhibition would be a financial success.⁴⁶

The following year, with John Forbes White still President, Stanhope Forbes exhibited *Dinner Hour in the Rope Walk* which was priced at £30. Frieda Röhl, who had married James Pittendrigh Macgillivray that year, exhibited *Waiting for the Tide*. Francis Edmond lent Guthrie's *To Pastures New*, which was exhibited as *The Goose*

⁴² George Reid to Mia Reid 8 July 1885 (see Appendix A).

⁴³ George Reid to Mia Reid 9 July 1885 (see Appendix A).

⁴⁴ George Reid to Mia Reid 8 July 1885 (see Appendix A).

⁴⁵ George Reid to John Forbes White. Undated.

⁴⁶ George Reid to Mia Reid 10 July 1885.

Herd - Leading to Pastures New and Guthrie himself submitted *In the Orchard* (Private Collection) as *Children in the Orchard* which had recently been completed and was priced it at £150. Josef Israels' large *Shipwrecked Mariner* (National Gallery, London) was also exhibited that year, having been lent by Alexander Young, of Blackheath (who was originally an Aberdonian) along with several other pictures. Young had purchased the painting very recently⁴⁷ and his willingness to lend may bear testament to White's powers of persuasion and ability to influence.

White's commitment to the Aberdeen Artists' Society did not preclude his involvement in other exhibitions and he lent Guthrie's *A Funeral Service in the Highlands* to the Edinburgh International in 1886.

By the time the third exhibition of the Aberdeen Artists' Society was held, from December 1887 to February, 1888 White was President, Archibald Reid Chairman and James Guthrie, Arthur Melville, Thomas Millie Dow, Alexander Mann, E.A. Walton, and James Pittendrigh Macgillivray were all professional members. That year *Waterlilies* was exhibited under its original French title *Les Nénuphars* and Lavery lent *A Summer Afternoon*, *Primroses*, *A Harmony in Black and Yellow* and *A Tennis Party* as *A Lawn Tennis Match*. The effect of Lavery's work was showing on Sam Reid, who showed *The Queen of the Tennis Lawn*. Alexander Young of Blackheath lent *Mantes la Jolie* by Corot and *God's Shrine* by Herkomer whilst Jozef Israels *The Rivals* was lent from Messrs Boussod, Valadon & Co., London. William Stott exhibited *Moonrise*, which, priced at £400, was the most expensive exhibit. Stanhope Forbes, and William MacTaggart also exhibited work.

It is clear that The Aberdeen Artists' Society exhibitions provided an important exhibiting space for both local artists and their contemporaries from Central Scotland and England and a place where the cross-fertilisation afforded at Seaton Cottage could be echoed in a public forum. White's role in orchestrating the society was fundamental, the part which he played in encouraging artists to submit and in encouraging his fellow Aberdonians to purchase their work should not be underestimated.

⁴⁷ See Dekkers *Jozef Israels 1824-1911* Groningen 1999 p 24.

6.8. White's Problems

By 1888 John Forbes White's position as Scotland's foremost art critic and connoisseur seemed assured. He was awarded an LL.D the following year (pl. 78) and was an honoured guest at the royal opening of the Glasgow International Exhibition (and was, consequently, included in Lavery's painting of the subject, pl. 79). In Edinburgh his young protégé Guthrie was up for election at the Royal Scottish Academy and, with Reid's support, he was duly elected.⁴⁸ White's finances, however, were perilous as he was on the verge of bankruptcy. Funding Reid, extended foreign travel, extravagant buying of pictures and the expense of a large family had all eaten into the profits of the business. A massive recession in the milling industry had been created by the arrival of corn from the mid-west of the United States, which was now accessible because of the opening of the railroads. More importantly the recent introduction of steel-hulled ships allowed flour to be transported rather than unmilled corn. White's problems had also probably been exacerbated by over-expansion on the Dundee site.⁴⁹

Three years earlier, at the end of May 1885, Mrs White, who was then aged forty-nine, had given birth to her sixth and last child, Dorothea. The following year, in August she went on holiday to Norway⁵⁰ and became ill, apparently with some sort of mental breakdown.⁵¹ This was the beginning of a long mental illness which eventually meant that she would be hospitalised permanently. Her illness - along with his own financial problems - led to White himself suffering from depression.

In 1888 White made the decision to close Kettocks Mills, to sell his Aberdeen homes and to move permanently to Dundee. Before he could do this, however, he would have to sell the bulk of his art collection, which he prepared to do over the next few months.

⁴⁸ George Reid to John Forbes White 13 November 1888 (see Appendix A).

⁴⁹ In 1887, only eleven years after the erection of the buildings White had, amongst other things, replaced the old fourteen pairs of milling stones with modern roller mills, which he had first seen being used in Hungary. See A.H. Miller *Glimpses of Old and New Dundee* 1925 pp 154-156.

⁵⁰ George Reid to Mia Reid 16 August 1886.

⁵¹ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 12 August 1886.

6.9. John Forbes White's Picture Sales

As early as February 1888 White had evidently consulted the Edinburgh auctioneer Dowell, who advised him to wait a few months before selling his paintings.⁵² A date in November was settled upon, but Reid expressed his worries over the fragile state of the art market, as a general recession had lowered prices considerably.⁵³ Whilst in the 1870s Reid had implored White "Don't part with the big Corot - I would pawn my watch and ten spoons sooner"⁵⁴ by 15th May 1888 he advised his friend to take any reasonable offer. Furthermore he expressed his worries over lending it to Glasgow, as White had intended to do, thus precluding a sale.⁵⁵

At this time the correspondence between Reid and White increased considerably. Reid's letters were at times sad⁵⁶ and at other times encouraging and supportive. Most seemed designed to take White's mind off the impending sale and, although even by 1890 Reid had still not visited Craigtay,⁵⁷ his care and concern for White is clear in his correspondence. On 8th July 1888, for example, he wrote to White of his recent visit to The Netherlands. He had spent three days with Jozef Israels at The Hague. Evidently it was a pleasant visit and Reid took the trouble to report back to White;

he is becoming sweeter and more loveable than ever - a dreamy, poetic soul - living apart in a world of his own. Madame Israels' idea of Paradise is Scheveningen, and there we landed daily for dinner & such amusements as were to be found.⁵⁸

He had also visited Archy Reid and Robert Weir Allan, who were travelling through The Netherlands and also Leslie Thomson.⁵⁹ He visited too the newly opened Rijksmuseum and noted how well Rembrandt's work was displayed and confirmed once more his devotion to the Master;

⁵² George Reid to John Forbes White 27 February 1888 (see Appendix A).

⁵³ George Reid to John Forbes White 9 March 1888 (see Appendix A).

⁵⁴ George Reid to John Forbes White Friday undated.

⁵⁵ In the event White did indeed lend the Corot to Glasgow (651) as well as seven other works - the Diaz flowerpiece (654), the Courbet plate of fruit (685), a landscape with horses by Mollinger (740), the Bosboom church interior (825) views of Meerkirk and Utrecht in black and white by Mollinger (2495 & 2496) and a sketch by Leon L'Hermitte of a Church procession (2494).

⁵⁶ George Reid to John Forbes White 19 May 1889 (see Appendix A).

⁵⁷ George Reid to John Forbes White 9 February 1891.

⁵⁸ George Reid to John Forbes White 8 July 1888.

"Mr Rembrandt", he wrote, "you were a wonderful man, nobody at all like you either before or since".

In spite of his difficulties White took the time in 1888 to write to Guthrie, congratulating him on his election to associate membership of the Royal Scottish Academy.⁶⁰

In September, the month before the sale, White himself went to Europe, to Denmark and Russia, visiting the Hermitage and Moscow, with two of his daughters.⁶¹ By 11th October 1888 White was back in London, and worried and undecided about many things. Clearly George Reid remained concerned about him and expressed his worries to J. Irvine Smith.⁶² Reid also wrote to White, advising him to publicise the sale as best he could and approving an illustrated catalogue. Reid recommended that White should sell the works distinctly as a collection and hang them separately at the sale, for he believed that White's reputation as a connoisseur would increase their prices.⁶³ White contemplated including paintings by Corot and Diaz in the Edinburgh sale but Reid was concerned about the risk of doing this. He tried to weigh up the advantages of including them, which, by attracting a richer audience might raise the prices of all the others, against the possible danger that by selling them in Edinburgh rather than in London, this might lower the prices of the best pictures. In the event the Corot and Diaz were not included in the Edinburgh sale, nor indeed was White's collection of works by Turner, which were sold in London.⁶⁴

The sale of White's paintings finally took place at Dowell's salerooms in George Street, Edinburgh on Saturday 1st December 1888 with viewing on the previous Thursday and Friday. In all there were seventy-two pictures for sale, of which twenty-nine were watercolours. There were Scottish works - by Sam Bough, Tom Gray, W.E. Lockhart, John MacWhirter, Hugh Cameron, James Cassie, Sir George Harvey and Archy Reid. The work of early 19th century English artists included paintings by De Wint, David Cox and C.J. Lewis. There were more recent realist paintings by Hubert

⁵⁹ George Reid to John Forbes White 10 June 1888.

⁶⁰ James L. Caw *Sir James Guthrie PRSA* London 1932 p 47.

⁶¹ George Reid to John Forbes White 9 September 1888.

⁶² George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 6 October 1888.

⁶³ George Reid to John Forbes White 19 October 1888.

⁶⁴ George Reid to John Forbes White 7 October 1888.

von Herkomer, Clara and Hilda Montalba and William Stott. There were French paintings by Eduard Frère, Fantin Latour and a still life by Madame Cazin and numerous Dutch paintings by Jozef and Isaac Israels, H. Van der Bakhuisen, Wynants, F. Crabeels, Gerard Bilders, J.H.L. de Haas, Alexander Mollinger and Mlle. Van Bosje.

The catalogue was specifically marked as being only a portion of White's "fine" collection, making it clear that White had not parted with all of his paintings. This had been made clear a little earlier when Reid wrote to him, consoling him by assuring him that even after the sale he would still have the cream of his collection.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, there were some important pictures on the list, including Reid's early *Broadsea* and his ambitious homage to Mollinger, *Whins in Bloom*. Chalmers' *End of The Harvest* was bought by Andrew Carnegie (it is still at his home, Skibo Castle). Works by Israels, including the large *The Departure* which had been exhibited at The Royal Scottish Academy in 1876 were sold as was, most significantly, Stott's *Le Passeur* which, the catalogue proudly declared, had won a third class medal at The Paris Salon in 1882.⁶⁶ James Guthrie's *A Highland Funeral* was also included in the sale.

In many ways these were White's bravest and most innovative acquisitions and, aside from the Corot, which was not parted with until 1892, these pictures illustrated very clearly White's fundamental contribution to artistic patronage in Scotland over the last thirty years.

As Reid had suspected the sale did not go well. The most important pictures - as far as Reid and White were concerned - were too avant-garde for the buyers in such a fragile art market as existed at the time; "I am sorry that the Stott and Guthrie's funeral did so badly," Reid wrote to White, "but I had doubts of both although when I saw you so hopeful about the latter I did not like to say so".⁶⁷ James Guthrie's cousin, James Gardiner, bought Guthrie's *A Funeral in the Highlands* for £100, less than half what White had paid for it only five years earlier. White also had a London sale which did not go well, many of the lots not even reaching their reserve.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ George Reid to John Forbes White 9 November 1888 (see Appendix A).

⁶⁶ In fact it was another painting by Stott, *La Baignade* that had been awarded the medal.

⁶⁷ George Reid to John Forbes White 2 December 1888

⁶⁸ George Reid to John Forbes White 17 December 1888. (see Appendix A).

White's art collection passed into the hands of many private collectors and public galleries. Over subsequent years the early provenance of much of these works was largely forgotten. It was White who had bought them from the artists and brought them into this country but, as a direct result of the sale of these works, White's long term reputation as one of Scotland's most important collectors and connoisseurs of modern art was all but lost. Although Bosboom's *Interior of The Bakenhuse, Haarlem* (pl. 7), for example, had a fairly uncomplicated history subsequently, it nevertheless lost its early provenance completely. Works in Scottish public collections also seemed to lose their early history so that, for example, *The Farmer's Daughter* by Orchardson was recorded as having belonged to Alexander Reid of Auchterarder (which it did). The Glasgow Art Galleries' catalogue entry omitted, however, White's ownership. Thus by not listing the earliest history of such paintings in the permanent collection catalogues of many important public art galleries White's stature as a collector was obscured, whilst that of the men who bought his paintings was raised since it subsequently appeared that they had been the first owners of these works. This was also true locally - an exquisite painting by James Cassie, *At Cove*, which was owned by a member of the Crombie family, was almost certainly bought from Cassie himself by White, but this information was not passed on when the painting was subsequently donated to Aberdeen Art Gallery.

6.10. Leaving Aberdeen

So deeply in debt was White in early 1888 that he had planned to sell Seaton Cottage and move entirely to Dundee.⁶⁹ In fact White either decided not to sell his beloved Seaton Cottage or could not find a purchaser for it and he owned it until his death.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, although retaining Seaton Cottage as a holiday home, he was leaving Aberdeen and its commercial and artistic life behind him. In recognition of this fact and to honour his contribution to both facets of the city's development a complimentary dinner was held at the Trinity Hall on 4th December 1888. White's contribution to his native city had been enormous. He was a Member of the Harbour

⁶⁹ George Reid to John Forbes White 27 February 1888 (see Appendix A).

⁷⁰ George Reid to John Forbes 15 May 1904.

Board, a director of the North of Scotland Bank and of the Aberdeen Jute Works. He was Vice President of the Eye Institution and Vice Consul to Norway and Sweden. He was a pioneer of scientific progress and was famed locally for being the first to use a steam locomotive on the roads of Aberdeen. He was Scotland's best-known art critic and collector and indubitably the city's most famous citizen.

As a parting gift White presented *Waterlilies* by Willem Roelofs to the new Art Gallery. Perhaps to match this gift and realising the artistic worth of his painting, Francis Edmond donated Guthrie's *To Pastures New* the same year.

In recognition of his encouragement of the arts and for all his other contributions to the city of Aberdeen subscribers raised funds to pay George Reid to depict his life-long friend and patron - to paint a portrait of White which, when displayed in the Art Gallery, would stand as a lasting testament to White's Aberdeen past (AAG pl. 80).

The sittings began on 17th of January 1889 and, over the next few months, White and Reid met regularly, the sittings providing a welcome opportunity to rekindle their friendship and to gossip about artistic matters, such as the current tiff between Whistler and William Stott of Oldham,⁷¹ whom Whistler subsequently referred to as "le désastre d'Oldham".⁷²

By October 1888 White had just completed his article on Velazquez and that artist was, above all others, the inspiration for the portrait, as Reid clearly reveals in his correspondence with White;

I see the scheme for your portrait - dark velvet against grey half-tone background - shadow of figure on do.- head warm and bright hair falling as dark - It will be very simple - figure alone down to tones.⁷³

⁷¹ George Reid to John Forbes 11 January 1889. (See Appendix A). The affair concerned the fact that Whistler and Stott had had a dispute at the Beefsteak Club on 3 January 1889. The previous summer Whistler had been upset by the amusement and curiosity caused by the fact that Stott had used Whistler's lover, Maud Franklin, as a model for his painting *Venus*, or *Nymph*, which he had exhibited at Suffolk Street where Whistler also had a painting on show which featured Maud. In spite of the fact that by this date Whistler's attentions were increasingly directed to Mrs Godwin, whom he married on 11 August 1888, he still evidently felt some possessive qualities towards Maud and bitterness against Stott for his involvement in the affair. See James Laver *Whistler* London 1930 pp 198-9.

⁷² *La Chauve-Souris et le Papillon - Correspondence Montesquiou-Whistler* edited by Joy Newton, Glasgow 1990 p 52.

⁷³ George Reid to John Forbes White 8 January 1888.

White cited his own favourite portrait as Velazquez's *Phillip IV* of 1635 (National Gallery, London)⁷⁴ and certainly the portrait follows the composition of this painting, with White depicted facing three-quarter to the right and in his left hand holding a sheaf of papers. In its sombre mood, very limited palette and overall simplicity however, the painting is much closer to Velasquez's earlier portrayal of Phillip IV of 1626-28 (Prado, Madrid) which would have been familiar to White, who had visited Spain, and to Reid, through engravings. In June Mia Reid attempted to assist his task by giving her husband a copy of the newly published Velasquez and his Times by Carl Justi.⁷⁵ Reid tried valiantly to emulate such mastery, but he was aware that it was an impossible task;

..and that for only this once I could not transform myself into a Velasquez or a Rembrandt or a Titian, but Alas! We are but poor creatures and you must take the will for the deed whatever its shortcomings. At least it has the one merit of being like you - although it may have little else to commend it.⁷⁶

This wish of both sitter and artist to create a truly great portrait put pressure on them both. Reid captured the likeness well enough but it revealed a man tortured by self-doubt and failure, his insecurity clearly evident in the disquiet of his expression. White's world-weary face and stiff, uncomfortable stance could not provide a sympathetic subject for Reid who remained dissatisfied with the final result.

The portrait was presented on Tuesday 18th June 1889 to Aberdeen Art Gallery and can be seen to symbolise the end of an era for both men. It encapsulated White's great achievements as an art critic and connoisseur but heralded too the sadder, quieter life that was to come. In Reid's case, it epitomised his life of the time - hurried, overworked and burdened by commissions for portraits which, like those of John Everett Millais, were becoming slicker and faster as he himself became more involved with the organs of power of the art world and, more specifically, with the institution which as a young man he had both battled against but within the shelter of whose hallowed walls he had fervently sought recognition and succour, the Royal Scottish Academy.

⁷⁴ Ina Mary Harrower John Forbes White Edinburgh 1918 pp 90-1.

⁷⁵ The copy, inscribed *G.R. from M.R. 1889* is in the archives of Aberdeen Art Gallery.

⁷⁶ George Reid to John Forbes White 8 January 1888.

CHAPTER 7

Great Achievements and Great Losses 1889-1920

7.1 George Reid as President of the Royal Scottish Academy

In 1891 George Reid was elected 7th President of the Royal Scottish Academy. He had proved himself to be a good administrator and dutiful academician and the vote was unanimous. At forty-nine years old, Reid was the youngest ever president by six years. He soon made it clear that, along with his relative youth, would come a desire to change and improve the Academy in a variety of ways. Reid was no longer the revolutionary who had co-authored the "*Veri Vindex*" pamphlet, but his planned changes were both radical and far reaching.

The first thing that Reid wished to address was the question of privilege. He advocated replacing the élitist annual dinner with a much larger reception and private view. Cutting down on such "needless expenditure" Reid instead advocated inviting members of the academy and five or six hundred leading citizens. Ladies would be included, tea and coffee served, music played and the rooms brightly lit. He suggested that on another day - perhaps a month later - an additional viewing would allow the exhibitors to meet the public and their patrons. This, he said, would "bring the outside artists into friendly contact with the members of the Academy and would greatly help to promote pleasanter and more friendly feelings between different members of the Profession".¹

Reid disapproved of academicians who went south to earn their fortune - something he had of course decided against himself (though perhaps for pragmatic as much as moral or nationalistic reasons). He was particularly critical of them when they sent back, for guaranteed inclusion in the Royal Scottish Academy's annual exhibition, second-rate works or paintings which had already been shown elsewhere.

Reid wanted to improve relations between the Academy and the Board of Manufacturers. He believed that there was a great deal of talent amongst the younger

¹ Inaugural speech of George Reid 15 December 1891 (see Appendix A).

men², but he was keen to address the training of art students. "Every possible effort" should be made, he declared, "to improve the present state of matters" - which was - and for long had been, he believed, "most unsatisfactory".³

The new Charter had now been passed, in which Associates had voting power and consequently a much greater say in the workings of the Association. Reid welcomed these changes. He advocated a more egalitarian approach to the Academy, particularly with reference to the young associates whom, he believed, should take a more active role in the voting procedures of the institution. His reasons, however, were not entirely altruistic, for in giving the younger men more power, he hoped that "by and by when we have the pleasure of seeing the Associates present at the meetings of the Academy, a better and more loyal spirit will prevail among them".⁴

Reid was keen to help Aberdeen artists but there was no hint of nepotism in his actions and he selected works on merit rather than authorship.⁵ Instead of proposing Archy Reid's work when it was unworthy, George Reid tried to pass portrait commissions to him, benefiting his career in legitimate rather than underhand ways.⁶

Reid was determined to make the membership more representative of different disciplines and specifically to include architects, of whom there were no full members. He duly put forward for election, at the recommendation of the Scottish Society of Architects, two Glasgow architects, John Honeyman and the aforementioned William Leiper.

Reid, however, was anxious to reduce the number of exhibits in the annual exhibitions. He had, no doubt, seen the minimalist hanging of the Grosvenor Gallery but it was probably White's private gallery at 269 Union Street (itself perhaps inspired

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ George Reid to John Forbes White 9 February 1886.

⁶ George Reid to John Forbes White 21 November 1890.

by Degas' reduced hang of exhibitions in Paris during the 1870s and 1880s)⁷ that was the main source for his own preference for a reduced hang.⁸

Reid's proclaimed aim was to ensure that the annual exhibitions should be "thoroughly representative of all that [was] best in the current art of the day - not only of the Scottish - but of other schools as well". In effect Reid wanted to promote Art in Scotland, not just Scottish Art. This *xenophilia* had come about through his tutelage under White, and, as the view of a true Internationalist, goes back to Blackie's teaching of some sixty years earlier.

His views were, on the surface, egalitarian, democratic and intended to attract and encourage the young and the foreign at the expense of the few, who appeared to him old, rich and privileged. Reid soon did achieve a greatly reduced hang. The crowded hangs of the 1880s, with over 1000 exhibits were soon abandoned. In 1891 that number had been reduced to 857, by the time of the 1891-2 exhibition to 831 and by 1893 to 517. Much the same number was included the following year (529 works) but by 1895, as Reid's formerly powerful position was threatened, this had risen again to 627 exhibits.

Reid, however, lacked political acumen and proved to be naïve and gauche in his dealings with others. In this inaugural speech were sown almost all the seeds of his own demise. His reputation as president of the Academy and also as a progressive artist were both fundamentally compromised, for in his speech he succeeded in alienating the rich, offending the London Scots, and - by making it clear that he wanted no dissension amongst them - patronising the younger artists.

Reid's tangible fear of the Academy's loss of power and influence on younger artists may have been prompted by the formation, on 16 February 1891, of the Scottish Society of Artists. This Society had been inaugurated with the intention of staging

⁷ On 12 April 1870 Degas addressed a letter to the Salon jury which was published in Paris Journal. In it he suggested getting away from a floor-to-ceiling, crowded hanging. He went on to carry this out at the subsequent Impressionist exhibitions.

⁸ Reid was by no means unique in his taste for a reduced hang. A few months earlier, in the autumn of 1891, Arthur Melville had been invited, along with Alfred East and Isaac Cooke, to hang the annual exhibition in Liverpool's Walker Art Gallery. He chose to adopt a single hang of seventy pictures, hung on hessian sacking. See Agnes McKay Arthur Melville Scottish Impressionist 1855-1904 Leigh-on-Sea 1951 p 78.

annual exhibitions. It differed from the Royal Scottish Academy in two fundamental ways. Firstly both lay and professional people could vote for the election of the president, and secondly no one was guaranteed entry of works to annual exhibitions. Both these principles made tacit criticism of the Academy and both were addressed in Reid's inaugural speech. The first exhibition of the society was held in the Royal Institution buildings in Edinburgh in 1892. Reid, obviously remembering the old adage "if you can't beat them, join them" did just that, being a founding member of the Society.

Although Reid had supported the establishment of the Scottish Society of Artists and its use of the Royal Academy building for exhibitions he was nevertheless concerned to ensure that standards were maintained at the Academy. Perhaps he saw the danger that other institutions would weaken the Academy and deter young artists from submitting works. This echoes the behaviour of all five presidents of the Royal Academy during Victoria's reign who also, "fought doggedly to defend the Royal Academy's domination of the art world".⁹ Leighton had perceived particular threats and "as President he was unstinting in his defence of the pre-eminence of the Royal Academy, seeking to neutralise such alternative exhibition venues as The Grosvenor Gallery and The New English Art Club".¹⁰

One of Reid's first tasks as President of the Royal Scottish Academy was to address the life drawing class. The student prize had been withheld and Reid was determined to see life drawing improve. His first lecture to the students, given on 27th November 1891, was the product of a man deeply imbued with a love of, and admiration for, the Ancient Greeks. In it he argues for study from plaster casts but, instead of drudgery, work from the antique, he declares, would become a source of "intense interest and enjoyment" (a sentiment with which few of the associates might have agreed). "If you want to learn something of the highest, the most perfect type of physical beauty the world has ever seen - or is ever likely to see" stated Reid, "you must learn it from the Greek sculptors". Reid's talk was not just about Greek art, but

⁹ Helen Valentine & Mary Anne Stevens Art in the Age of Queen Victoria - Treasures from the Royal Academy of Arts Permanent Collection London 1999 p 55.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p 56.

covered every facet of Greek life. He advocated a study of not just their art but their land, food, climate, beauty, religion, sport, clothes and buildings. Such a justification for following the Greek path goes far beyond the standard Victorian deference to this ancient civilisation and could only have come about through Reid's schooling under John Forbes White.

In this particular point Reid's speech recalls White's beliefs, "If classics are to stand their ground, except for exams!" White had once written, "there must be the desire to point out the beauty of Greek literature, to get at the heart of that gifted race - to learn the secrets of their art, and comprehend their life".¹¹ White's beliefs were in turn learned from his master Blackie who had never restricted himself to a study of one aspect of their lives alone.¹²

7.2 John Forbes White and Dundee

The same year that Reid had reached the pinnacle of his profession, John Forbes White began to suffer from severe depression.¹³ His financial problems, the move to Dundee, the loss of much of his collection and his wife's illness had been traumatic. Daniel Cottier had caught rheumatic fever on his last visit to Aberdeen and had died in Jacksonville, Florida in April 1891.¹⁴ Some time before 11th June 1891 a further catastrophe occurred, when White's son David was accidentally shot in the head.¹⁵

In Dundee White attempted to recreate the life he had enjoyed for so many years in Aberdeen. He took an active part in the political life of the city, becoming Vice President of the District Liberal Unionist Association. He established a Greek Society, following the format of the Homeric Society, which had been founded in Aberdeen by Blackie.¹⁶ The society allowed him to stay in contact with old friends - Blackie, travelled from Edinburgh for the society meetings and to see White, his most "beloved

¹¹ Ina Mary Harrower *John Forbes White* Edinburgh 1918 p 74.

¹² J.S. Blackie *Notes on a Life* Edinburgh 1910 pp 137-138.

¹³ George Reid to John Forbes White 10 February 1892 & 5 March 1892.

¹⁴ W.E. Henley *Collection Cottier Catalogue* Durand-Ruel Paris 1892 p 10.

¹⁵ George Reid to John Forbes White 11 and 14 June 1891. By 14 June David was able to talk and eventually made a full recovery.

¹⁶ See J.S. Blackie *op. cit.* p 136-137.

student".¹⁷ It may well have been through this association of like minds that Patrick Geddes, who was teaching in Dundee at the time, came to form a deep admiration for Blackie and appropriately, it was his moving description of Blackie's funeral, in 1895, that formed the opening passage of Geddes' oration to his much hoped for Scottish renaissance.¹⁸

White continued to write and, in 1898, contributed a preface for a book by J.G. Reid entitled At the Sign of the Brush and Pen: Being Notes on Some Black and White Artists of Today. In his preface White extolled economy of line, citing Rembrandt's etchings and drawings as being perfect illustrations of this. He praised the spontaneity of the best artists, admiring the rapid sketch "'by first intention," as surgeons say".¹⁹

White continued to travel and in September 1892 was in Normandy with one of his daughters. Two years later he visited Greece with his friend James Cunningham²⁰ and in 1896, with his daughter Ina, he toured Egypt. His friendship with Reid meant that he lent regularly to the Royal Scottish Academy, so that his, albeit smaller, collection could continue to have an influence on Scottish artists.

He also tried to assimilate himself into the artistic world of Dundee. He had been a committee member of the Dundee Fine Arts Association for many years and Reid encouraged him to take as active a part in this society as he had in those of Aberdeen. Furthermore Reid suggested that his recently completed portrait should be lent to the inaugural exhibition of the new art gallery in Dundee, a loan that White was happy to orchestrate.²¹ White also lent to the same exhibition Reid's painting of roses and Orchardson's *The Farmer's Daughter* (GAGM). White, however, never had the same involvement in Dundee art events as he had in Aberdeen. He may have found it upsetting to see the pictures that he had once owned lent to the Dundee exhibitions by others - as when, for example, Guthrie's *A Highland Funeral* was lent to Dundee in

¹⁷ W. K. Leask "John Forbes White" Aberdeen University Review Vol. VI 1919 p 49.

¹⁸ Patrick Geddes "The Scots Renaissance" The Evergreen Spring 1895 Edinburgh pp 131-139. Two of White's Aberdonian artist-friends, James Pittendrigh Macgillivray and James Cadenhead, contributed to The Evergreen.

¹⁹ J.G. Reid At the Sign of the Brush and Pen: Being Notes on Some Black and White Artists of Today Preface by John Forbes White Aberdeen 1898 p 8.

²⁰ George Reid to J. Irvine Smith 4 September 1892.

²¹ George Reid to John Forbes White 6 August 1889.

1889. The nature of the organisation in Dundee was very different from the Aberdeen Artists Society - most particularly in that the committee in Dundee comprised collectors rather than artists. The collectors who ran it - including Keiller and Orchar - were now elderly men who were continuing to buy paintings by the artists whom White had long since forsaken. White's opinion of the Association may be indicated by the fact that the following year (1890) he lent nothing to their annual exhibition. Perhaps sensitive to the stature of Keiller and Orchar (who was the Chairman of the Association), or less inspired by the set-up there, White did not seek the high office that he had held in Aberdeen.

The artists whom White was supporting at the time were far less involved with Dundee than they had been with Aberdeen - not only were they not committee members of the Association but they were also not regular exhibitors. John Lavery lent two items in 1890 and Millie Dow (who lived in Kirkcaldy) was a regular exhibitor, but Guthrie did not send his major paintings to Dundee as he had to Aberdeen.

Perhaps sensing White's lack of purpose, late in 1889 Reid channelled White's energies and expertise into selecting a Rembrandt for the National Gallery of Scotland, using £5000 which had been gifted by the Rt. Hon William McEwan. McEwan had specified that he wanted a Rembrandt for the collections, but not which one. White and Reid together elicited the help of both Jozef Israels²² and Willem Roelofs, sending Roelofs to examine a painting of a philosopher, which was on offer from a gallery in Brussels.²³ Having been offered and having turned down various dubious works, White's final choice, *A Woman in Bed*, was typically discerning. The purchasing committee felt the need to have the proposed acquisition endorsed by the then President of The Royal Academy in London, Frederic, Lord Leighton. White, however, was as knowledgeable of Rembrandt's art at this date as any man living, a fact which was acknowledged a few years later when he was commissioned to write the entry on Rembrandt for the Encyclopaedia Britannica. The accreditation by

²² Jozef Israels to George Reid 17 December 1889 (see Appendix A). Israels not only admired and emulated the work of Rembrandt, he also studied him, writing a book on Rembrandt in 1908.

²³ George Reid to John Forbes White 5 March 1892.

Leighton was a sign of the academicians' insecurities, rather than an indication of any failings on White's part.

White and Reid's friendship with Israels remained strong. They communicated regularly and discussed modern art at length. One passage in particular reveals the similarity of their tastes; "I quite forgot when writing to you last night," wrote Reid to White, "to enclose Israels nice letter. What he says about the English artists is true, mais quoi faire? The public love to have it so - and I suppose are entitled to have their tastes gratified."²⁴ Two years later Reid was still bemoaning the state of most English art, writing to his friend after a visit to the Royal Academy; "Painting - pure and simple - seems to be almost a lost art - Get a story and tell it so that the public can at once see what it is all about - that is the sort of thing that goes down".²⁵

White retained contacts with Jozef Israels throughout this time, whilst his children kept in touch with Jozef's son Isaac, who presented Alice Macdonell (White's eldest daughter) with a watercolour of a seated girl holding a parasol (possibly her own daughter) in 1897.²⁶ Mathilde Israels had visited Scotland with her husband Dr Cohen Tervaert who had his portrait painted by Reid, but such highlights did little to elevate White's spirits. He found Dundee "essentially industrial" and for his children too, living there proved somewhat trying.²⁷

In 1892 White still had his Diaz still life. He lent it to the Royal Scottish Academy that year but, as Reid reached the pinnacle of his profession, White's fortunes continued on a downward spiral and, through financial necessity, in March he was forced to part with it and also with Corot's *Pastorale*, *Souvenir d'Italie* (they were both bought by James Reid of Auchterarder). Clearly he had reconciled himself to the parting, but he found it particularly poignant;

This is the last day of the Corot on my walls" he wrote, "To-morrow it comes down to be packed for Glasgow. It has been my friend and

²⁴ George Reid to John Forbes White 9 January 1889.

²⁵ George Reid to John Forbes White 17 May 1891.

²⁶ The watercolour, which is inscribed and dated: *Souvenir à Madame Macdonell 15 Avril 1897* is in a private collection in France.

²⁷ John Forbes White to James Pittendrigh Macgillivray 23 January 1902. James Pittendrigh Macgillivray MSS (National Library of Scotland Dep 349/67) (see Appendix A).

adviser for eighteen years, my standard of ideal, yet true, landscape; true because it conveys accurately and fully a great amount of facts and appearance of Nature, yet ideal because it is the composition of a great artist, selecting and subordinatingI let it go with a mixture of joy and sorrow. Joy that it has been to us a source of pure pleasure and because my judgement is confirmed. But parting with a friend always brings pain..²⁸

White's grief is almost tangible and, in reading of this difficult parting, another passionate collector, Edgar Degas, is recalled;

bent over the much-loved paintings, the companions of his life, the Daumiers, the Prud'hons, the Delacroix and the Corots [Degas] touched them as if to recognise them, as if to seize with his hands those colours, those lines, that pictorial beauty which he craved; he came back every day; a group of collectors, friends, young people, came with him, gathering around him so as not to leave him alone with his grief.²⁹

White too felt the physical loss of his collection, but he may have been somewhat consoled by the price the painting achieved. White had bought *Souvenir - Pastorale d'Italie* for £950 in 1874 - a sum, which at the time seemed inordinately high - but, in spite of the poor art market at the time,³⁰ it was sold in 1892 for £4000. His taste was vindicated by this price, which was due, in no small part, to the fashion in Britain for Corot that had been nurtured and promoted - if not created - by John Forbes White.

7.3 Robert Brough and Aberdeen's Artistic Life without Reid and White.

With John Forbes White now gone for much of the year from Aberdeen a new group of men took over the running of the Aberdeen Artists' Society, which continued to thrive. By 1900 the executive committee had changed, with artists still closely involved but new collectors coming to the fore. Theodore Crombie, of the Crombie cloth company, was appointed Vice President. Other local businessmen, A.M. Ogston, James Murray and John Fleming were appointed honorary members. To some extent

²⁸ Ina Mary Harrower *John Forbes White* Edinburgh 1908 pp 38-41.

²⁹ Jacques-Émile Blanche "Notes sur la Peinture Moderne" *Revue de Paris* Paris 1913 p 27.

³⁰ In 1891 a Mrs Thomson had sold her pictures and all had fetched low prices. Samuel Smiles to George Reid 22 February 1891 (see Appendix A).

the tastes of these men were reflected both in the exhibits and in the new artist-members, who included H.H. La Thangue, George Frampton, John Singer Sargent and Solomon J. Solomon. The Scottish contingent remained national and along with artists with North-East origins such as Joseph Farquharson (who was a good friend of Sargent),³¹ and James Pittendrigh Macgillivray, were artists from the Central Belt, including T. Millie Dow, James Guthrie and George Henry.

A photograph of the executive committee of that year (pl. 81) makes clear the high quality of paintings that they had been able to attract. They included *Ellen Terry as Lady Macbeth* by Sargent (Tate Gallery) and works by Waterhouse, Swan and Abbey. The selection, however, revealed that traditional collecting tastes, rather than the adventurousness of White's years, were in the ascendant.

The younger artists in Aberdeen formed their own sketching club, the Aberdeen Pen and Pencil Club, which was inaugurated on 2nd March 1891. As in the case of the Scottish Society of Artists, which formed the same year, their need for such a society may have been a reflection of their dissatisfaction with the Aberdeen Artists Society to provide a forum for exciting and innovative work as it had once done under White's presidency. The lack of surprise and challenge in the exhibits is noticeable – it had become no more than an exhibition of members' work, peppered with anecdotal work by Royal Academicians.

There can be little doubt, however, that the art exhibited provided a great source of inspiration for the younger generation of Aberdeen artists, of whom Robert Brough (1872-1905) was probably the best known. With George Reid now increasingly further south, Robert Brough was able to assume his mantle as portrait painter to the rich of Aberdeen. He developed a particularly close relationship with the Crombie family, whose wealth had been founded on the production of woollen cloth and whose mill at Grandholm stood near Kettocks Mill on the north bank of the River Don.

³¹ At the age of twelve Sargent took painting lessons with Farquharson. They may have met again at the studio of Carolus-Duran in the late 1870s. In 1881 Farquharson lent his London studio to Sargent whilst he was travelling in the Middle East. Sargent painted a portrait of Poppy Graeme, a relation of Farquharson, and dedicated the portrait to Farquharson to thank him for this hospitality. Some time later Sargent stayed at Farquharson's estate of Finzean, some twenty miles west of Aberdeen.

Theodore Crombie (1845-1922) commissioned Brough to paint all four of his children. The portrait of Alice Crombie (born 1885), the first that Brough completed, was accepted to hang at the Royal Scottish Academy Exhibition of 1896. Seeing this portrait and his *St Anne of Brittany* (untraced) hanging there motivated the director of the Royal Fine Art Academy of Munich to invite Brough to exhibit in Munich that year.

The portrait of Alice is lost, as is the portrait of her brother Adrian (born 1884). Brough's paintings of Theodora (born 1882) and Kathleen (born 1892) however survive. The portrait of Theodora (pl. 82) is a large-scale, ambitious portrait of a forbidding young lady. Theodora (or "Dolly") is a strange combination of child and woman. She seems on the very threshold of adulthood - her skirt is not full-length, her hair is down and in the background can be seen some music sheets discarded in a careless way, just as a child might do. Dolly's bearing, however, is not only adult, it is regal. She has the most disturbing presence, one feels ill at ease in her company - this eldest child has a consciousness beyond her fourteen years.

Living next door to St Lukes, Brough had grown up in an atmosphere redolent with the influence of Velasquez. Brough was a particular favourite of Mia Reid, and could have had access to the library at St Lukes, where he could see Justi's book on Velasquez amongst many others. With her large features - and almost Hapsburg chin - Dolly owes much to Velasquez's depiction of the Spanish royal family of the 17th century and, like Velasquez's portraits of the infantas, trussed up in uncomfortable adult clothes, she appears more like a matriarch than a girl. Through Reid, White, Manet, Whistler, Sargent and Peploe (the last two being Brough's closest friends) Brough had been deeply affected by Velasquez's art. In composition, colour and mood *Dolly* draws much from Velasquez's masterpiece of consummate psychological penetration, the famous and highly influential *Pope Innocent X* of 1630 (Doria-Pamphili Gallery, Rome). Both portraits depict the sitter three-quarter length and are almost exactly the same dimensions. Dolly's dress is the same colour as the pope's vestments - a rich, red velvet, contrasted with bold flashes of white. Dolly's pose is the same as Pope Innocent X, only in reverse. In one hand, where he holds a document, she has a fan, whilst the other, like his, rests languorously on the arm of the chair,

suggesting in a very subtle way at the potential energy of the sitter. Most significantly the seventy-six year old pope and fourteen year old girl share the same distrustful expression.

A lighter touch is provided by the still life detail of the painting - particularly the pink hydrangeas in an oriental bowl - which recall those of Whistler, Melville and Reid, whose paintings Brough certainly knew. This is the only concession to fashionable, feminine portraiture of the day, however, and in this work Brough seems to follow an unusual and unexpected way of portraying the teenage daughter of the man who commissioned the work. Theodore Crombie funded and, apparently, accepted the painting, which was subsequently (and presumably with his permission) exhibited as *The Sulky Girl*.

7.4 Portraits by Arthur Melville

In spite of taking a back seat in the art world of Dundee, White still kept in touch with his artist friends. He was keen to encourage young artists - even one whom he had never met but whose work he admired, James Pittendrigh Macgillivray, by trying to obtain commissions for him in Aberdeen.³² Indeed both Reid and White actively promoted Macgillivray and attempted to find him work.³³ Guthrie painted a study of White coming down the stairs at Craigtay with the stained glass of Daniel Cottier visible behind him.³⁴ A little later, between 1897 and 1900, White's son in law, the husband of Alice White, W. R. Macdonell, had his portrait painted by Guthrie in London.³⁵ White's most favoured artist at this time, however, was Arthur Melville, who visited the White family both in Aberdeen and later in Dundee, where, in 1892 he painted a watercolour of Mrs White, holding a Japanese-style fan and seated before a wall of paintings (private collection pl. 83). In the summer of 1896 he visited them in

³² John Forbes White to James Pittendrigh Macgillivray 9 May 1893. James Pittendrigh Macgillivray MSS (National Library of Scotland Dep 349/67) (see Appendix A).

³³ George Reid to James Pittendrigh Macgillivray 1 August 1897. James Pittendrigh Macgillivray MSS (National Library of Scotland Dep 349/56) (see Appendix A).

³⁴ Recalled by a descendent of John Forbes White in conversation with the author.

³⁵ Sir James L. Caw Sir James Guthrie PRSA London 1932 p 72. Alice White and W.R. Macdonell were the parents of A.G. Macdonell, author of England their England.

Dundee again, staying for six weeks in order to paint a full-length portraits of one of White's daughters.³⁶

This was a portrait of White's second daughter Rachel, whom Chalmers had depicted as a young girl (pl. 23). The result of Melville's stay was one of Melville's most successful and significant paintings, *Portrait - Opal and Grey* (untraced pl. 84). This tall, thin portrait, measuring 187 x 87.5 cm. was in some respects a pair to Stott's portrait of Alice of some fifteen years earlier and like that painting it too, both in its format and title, was a clear homage to James McNeill Whistler and most particularly to his *Symphony in White No 2: The Little White Girl* of 1864 (Tate Gallery) which had been exhibited in London in 1892, in Glasgow in 1893, and which would have been very familiar to both artist and client. Rachel adopts the same pose as Whistler's model, although in reverse, leaning against a pale fireplace (presumably at Craigtay) with her arm resting on the mantelpiece. Above the mantel is a mirror which reflects back into the room and recalls Manet's *Un Bar aux Folies Bergère* of 1881-2 (Courtauld Galleries, London) which had been exhibited at the Paris Salon in 1882 and again, very recently, in 1896 at Durand-Ruel's gallery in Paris. However, in spite of these references to Whistler and Manet, this is a swagger portrait of the Sargent school. Rachel is depicted in stylish dress - with leg o'mutton sleeves and swinging skirt. Her pose is supremely confident - her gaze is not nostalgically towards the mirror (as in the Whistler picture) but boldly to the onlooker. Her free arm does not fall listlessly to her side but rests akimbo - a mark of confidence and even manly prowess. It was a pose much favoured by Sargent, who painted numerous portraits with similar pose at around this date, for both male and female sitters, most notably *Mrs George Swinton* of 1896-7 (Art Institute, Chicago) which was exhibited at the New Gallery in London shortly after completion. On the mantel a bowl of boldly blocked flowers adds a feminine touch to what is otherwise a formidable representation of woman. These

³⁶ Melville may have painted two of White's daughters. An unfinished portrait by him, entitled *The Brown Woman - Miss White* and measuring almost exactly the same as the portrait of Alice was exhibited at the Royal Institution in 1906 (40) and at the Glasgow Institute for the Fine Arts in 1907 (57).

flowers recall paintings by Whistler and Manet but the bold and forthright manner in which the paint is blocked to form them, once again points to Sargent. This painting was illustrated in *The Studio*³⁷ and no doubt seen and discussed by many artists of the day. Its echo can be seen in the work of F.C.B Cadell, who knew Melville and whose painting *Reflections* of c.1915 (GAGM), and several others of around that date, bears more than a passing resemblance to it.

Ian Gale states that in *Portrait - Opal and Grey* Melville abandons the more Whistlerian style of *The White Piano* of 1892 (Harris Museum & Art Gallery, Preston) and adopts an approach more akin to Manet or Sargent. Furthermore Gale suggests that this change might have come about because of the wishes of the client.³⁸ Andrew Walker suggests that Sargent had adopted his bold pose in order to suggest Elizabeth Swinton's "free spirit and emancipation".³⁹ It is quite possible that in the case of *Portrait - Opal and Grey* White - or the sitter herself - would have desired such a stance, since Rachel was, like all of White's three daughters, a formidable, intelligent and intellectually ambitious woman. Whilst the varied elements - of Whistler, Stott, Manet and Sargent - come together in this painting, rather than one influence overriding any other, White's involvement in the finished painting should not be underestimated. White had, since 1868, been extolling the virtues of Whistler (see p. 34). He admired Velasquez more than any other artist and in the work of Manet and Sargent could see and admire the influence of Velasquez. Long before painting these portraits Melville had visited Seaton Cottage and presumably, had there the same access to White's writings, thoughts and collection as had Stott and the numerous other artists whose work had undoubtedly been affected by their contact with White. Melville's association with White and the Aberdeen art world had by this time, extended over virtually the entire length of his career. As has been seen, he even used an Aberdeen framer - John Kesson - to produce the gilt oak frames that he, like Whistler, preferred to use. It seems likely that the experience of visiting White at

³⁷ T. Martin Wood "The Art of The Late Arthur Melville RWS ARSA" *The Studio* XXXVII No 158 May 1906. pp 285-293 illus. p 291.

³⁸ Ian Gale *Arthur Melville* Edinburgh 1996 p 81.

³⁹ Andrew Walker *American Arts at the Art Institute of Chicago* Chicago 1998.

Seaton Cottage, which he likened to a short poem about an idyll by R.L. Stevenson⁴⁰ had a similar effect on the young Arthur Melville and that Gale is correct in presuming that the client did indeed affect the finished painting.

7.5 George Reid's Later Portraits

The confident pose of Rachel in *Portrait - Opal and Grey* - with hand on hip and forward stare - recalls not only Sargent's portraits but also those of Frans Hals, as for example, his portrait of *Willem van Heythuyzen* of 1650 (Alte Pinakothek, Munich). The inspiration however, probably came through Sargent, rather than directly from Hals. George Reid, like Sargent, was greatly inspired by such paintings and his knowledge of the old masters was sufficient for it to be assumed that when he adopted this pose he was not only following the current fashion (created of course, by the immensely influential Sargent) but also recalling Hals himself. This is probably true of the pose and simplicity of composition of *William Henderson* of 1898 (Town Hall, Aberdeen pl. 85). By 1903, however, the direct debt to Hals is less clear and Reid's portrait of Sir Joseph Swan (untraced) suggests that by then, Sargent was having the same, strong influence on Reid as he was on almost all other portraitists of the day.

1897 was Jubilee year and has been pinpointed as the high point of Empire. Contemporary British art was celebrated with the opening of the Tate Gallery. The very rich required portraits by the best known artists and Millais' death the previous year put further pressure on Reid to take on such commissions. Many of Millais' sitters were Scots and the richest or most prominent of them turned to Reid to replace Millais. In 1897 Reid painted portraits of the Earl of Home, Andrew Usher and Sir G. Graham Montgomery of the British Linen Bank. The following year his sitters were even more illustrious - including Sir Charles Pritchard, of the India Office, The Marquis of Lothian, the Marquis of Tweeddale, Lord Balfour of Burleigh and The Macleod of Macleod. In 1902 he completed portraits of The Earl of Stair as well as majors, generals, lord provosts and university professors. Reid longed to be able to paint more landscapes,⁴¹ but supporting his extended family meant that, even late in his

⁴⁰ Ina Mary Harrower *John Forbes White* London 1908 pp 56-57.

⁴¹ George Reid to John Forbes White 21 August 1870 (see Appendix A).

career, he could not abandon this profitable branch of his art. Not only did Reid have his life prescribed by portrait painting, he was also pressurised by the sitters to exhibit particular pictures.⁴²

Throughout the 1890s Reid continued to develop and change his painting style. Of all his portraits of this late stage in his career, perhaps the one where these changes are most evident is *Tom Morris* of 1902 (St Andrews Golf Course pl. 86). Reid's depiction of the green keeper resembles not so much the dreamy visions of Whistler and his followers, nor the flamboyant *tours de force* of Sargent, but recalls instead the rugged realism of somewhat earlier paintings, by Jules Bastien-Lepage and James Guthrie. With its bold, square brushstrokes, three-quarter length format, lighter background, heightened tonality and almost overwhelming sense of the sitter's presence, it is closer to Guthrie's *A Hind's Daughter* of 1883 (National Gallery of Scotland) or his *Old Willy, A Village Worthy* of 1886 (both GAGM) than to anything Reid had produced himself more recently. Few, if any other portraits by Reid repeat the style and formula of this painting, though in his few landscapes of the time, such as *Durham* of 1890 (pl. 60) Bastien-Lepage's preference for a high horizon and the light grey overall tonality of his work is recalled. Like *Tom Morris*, *Durham* is brutally honest - a bold view of what appears to be an industrial city, seen at its least picturesque.

Although Guthrie's early work could move him on occasion, Reid's abiding inspiration was Velasquez, who continued to have a strong hold on his work. Reid was not alone in his admiration of Velasquez. White wrote on both Rembrandt and Velasquez for *The Quarterly Review*.⁴³ He admired both artists' ability to master facial expression, but for him Velasquez was the superior of the two and he reserved for him the accolade "Greek of Greeks". White admired particularly the statuesque form of Velasquez's subjects. White contrasts this with Rembrandt's dramatic visions - the momentary aspect of each scene. Of course, White was not the only critic to hold Velasquez in such high esteem. Marc Simpson is correct when he states that "many

⁴² George Reid to John Forbes White 26 January 1890 (see Appendix A).

⁴³ Ina Mary Harrower *John Forbes White* Edinburgh 1918 pp 92-3.

painters and art writers of the later nineteenth century admired Velasquez above all other masters".⁴⁴ Ruskin wrote, for example, "considered as pieces of art only, the works of Velasquez are the only consummate pieces in the world".⁴⁵ His subtle treatment of black and all colours close to black fascinated White and Reid but also Ruskin, who had once said of him that "his black is more precious than most other people's crimson".⁴⁶

Velasquez was affecting the art of many of the artists whom Reid and White admired at this time - Whistler, Lavery and Melville amongst them, all of whom borrowed compositions and poses from Velasquez. Whistler's *Self Portrait in Brown and Gold* of 1895-1900 (Hunterian Museum & Art Gallery), for example, is clearly inspired by Velasquez's *Pablo de Valladolid* of c.1632 (Prado, Madrid). As has been illustrated, Reid also borrowed directly from Velasquez. For Reid to make the transition from admiring Velasquez to admiring Sargent was an easy step to take. They shared many characteristics - a restricted palette, extreme tonal range (mostly very dark), unblended brushstrokes and a preference for concentrating on the figure (rather than the face as Rembrandt did). R.A.M. Stevenson was a fellow pupil of Carolus-Duran with Sargent and wrote a book on Velasquez which was widely circulated. Justi also popularised the artist. During the 1880s artists were becoming very familiar with Velasquez's work and his influence on them was all pervading. Critics noted Sargent's debt to Velasquez in particular. One critic wrote of him, "who besides Velasquez can make all his dabs, sweeps and splashes just in tone and colour as well as exquisitely communicative of realistic form?".⁴⁷ Reid could not ignore such elements when his clients were so aware and in admiration of them. He followed the fashion and adopted many of them in his own work. Throughout the 1890s Rembrandt's intense vision became less obvious in Reid's work - and was replaced by the forceful, simple compositions of Velasquez and Sargent, where the entire figure, rather than just the head, is given prominence. This is true of *Rev Professor D. D. Mitchell* of 1894 (St

⁴⁴ Marc Simpson "Sargent, Velázquez and the Critics - Velasquez come to Life Again" *Apollo* September 1998 p 3.

⁴⁵ *Works of John Ruskin* London 1903-12 Vol. XXI p 205.

⁴⁶ *The Elements of Drawing* 1857 *Works of John Ruskin* London 1903-12 Vol. XV p 154.

⁴⁷ "Chronicle of Art: Art in August" *The Magazine of Art* 1886 Vol. IX 1886 PXLII.

Andrews University) and *Mr Speaker Gully, afterwards 1st Viscount Selby* of 1906 (House of Commons). The composition and treatment of *Rt. Rev James Moorhouse, Bishop of Manchester* of 1904 (Manchester City Art Gallery pl. 87) is unerringly close to Velasquez's *Pope Innocent X*, the same painting that had inspired Brough's *Dolly* seven years before. Perhaps the acme of this late flowering of Reid's portraiture is his third and final attempt to depict White's mentor, which resulted in the wonderfully romantic *Professor John Stuart Blackie* of 1892 (SNPG pl. 88) in which Reid succeeds in capturing Blackie in tense pose and apparently full of energy, - as the "happy warrior"⁴⁸ as he liked to think of himself, even though he was, by then, aged eighty-one.

One critic stated that the influence of Velasquez and Spain was in reaction against contemporary French Art, the "gaudy, tawdry color of some of the prominent French painters of the present day".⁴⁹ In fact many French artists were painting severely simple portraits. It seems likely that these portraits were very influential on Reid who, working in Paris and visiting France relatively often, had close contact with them. It was Carolus-Duran, Sargent's master, who had instructed his pupils "Velasquez, Velasquez, Velasquez, étudiez sans relâche Velasquez".⁵⁰ He was not alone in doing so and Velasquez's compositions and palette can be discerned in the portraits of Fantin-Latour, as in his *Portrait of Manet* of 1867 (The Art Institute of Chicago) and indeed in Manet's *Antonin Proust* of 1880 (The Toledo Museum of Art). This portrait had been exhibited at the Salon in 1880, where Reid might have seen it on his way back from Italy. In his portrait of William Duthie (AAG pl. 89) he depicts his subject wearing a top hat (as both Fantin-Latour and Manet had done in the two aforementioned works). The added casualness created by Duthie's overcoat and his relaxed, informal pose, with his hand in his pocket, shows how, by the 1890s, Reid was choosing increasingly unexpected and seemingly spontaneous poses. This is also true of *William Carnie* (AAG pl. 90), where the impression of a moment in time captured recalls Degas' intimate study of the dealer Edmond Duranty of 1879 (GAGM).

⁴⁸ A.S. Walker "The Portraits of George Reid" *The Studio* April 1912 Vol. 55 pp 170.

⁴⁹ The Exhibition of the Art Museum" *Boston Evening Transcript* 10 May 1883 p 6.

⁵⁰ Evan Charteris *John Singer Sargent* New York 1927 p 28.

Reid's influences were many and varied. J.J. Tissot for example, was an artist who was certainly not admired in Reid's circle. Yet Reid's portrait of *Mr Melland* (untraced pl. 91) bears a striking resemblance - both in the pose of the sitter and in the placing of a cut-off map above the desk - to Tissot's *Colonel Frederick Gustavus Burnaby* of 1870 (National Portrait Gallery), though it lacks entirely the swagger element and dashing effect of Tissot's much earlier painting.

In spite of all these varied influences, Reid's openness to them - which led to a simple treatment of the subject - may well have come from the legacy of Sir Henry Raeburn, who had an enormous influence in Scotland on those who followed him, and particularly on J. Watson Gordon and George Reid. The simplicity of form, limited palette and dashing brushstroke of Raeburn may well have had as much influence on Reid as that of Sargent or his French contemporaries. It could also have contributed to Reid's openness to such artists. A.S. Walker⁵¹ and several other critics, noted how Reid captured the fundamental Scottishness of his sitters, a characteristic that was often absent from portraits which followed more strictly the tenets of Whistler and Sargent. His churchmen were of the Church Militant, his politicians rigid and uncompromising. This was a talent that could not deal with delicacies and subtleties and was completely out of its depth when depicting women. Reid realised this and avoided painting them when at all possible. Reid's skill lay in portraying men. Their simple, dark attire and ruddy faces lent themselves to his preferred portrait style, which was broad and intensely masculine.

Conversely at the same time Alexander Roche (1863-1921) had come to specialise in painting women, filling a niche Reid could not or did not wish to occupy. Reid never painted his own wife, but instead commissioned Roche to do so. In 1896 Roche painted a full-length portrait of Mia Reid (AAG pl. 92). The portrait was exhibited at the Royal Scottish Academy the following year. Reid's encouragement and patronage of Roche puts paid to the idea that Reid disapproved of the so-called "Glasgow Boys" or that he would have disapproved of Melville's association with

⁵¹ See A.S. Walker "The Portraits of George Reid" *The Studio* April 1912 Vol. 55 pp 168-178.

them as has been suggested by several critics.⁵² Indeed Reid was clearly supportive of Roche, a fact that Roche confirmed himself, when describing him to James Pittendrigh Macgillivray as “very kind and encouraging”.⁵³ When Roche did paint men, the influence of Reid is clear, as in *William Elphinstone Malcolm Esq. MA DL* (untraced)⁵⁴ where the treatment of the background, and also the pose and painterly treatment of the sitter, all point to the influence of Reid.

7.6 The Retiral of George Reid

In 1891 George Reid was awarded an honorary degree of LLD from St Andrews University and in 1894 he received the same honour from Aberdeen University. His career and stature in the Scottish art world might have seemed assured. Certainly he believed that he had done much to change and improve painting in Scotland and he looked upon himself as something of a tolerant and benign elder statesman.⁵⁵ This view however was not shared by many younger Scottish artists, for whom Reid had come to be regarded as a reactionary and obdurate impediment to progress. These feelings were further fuelled when George Reid gave an interview that was published in the newly formed London evening paper, The Westminster Gazette in 1893. In an unguarded moment Reid had fired off to the interviewing journalist, castigating many young artists whom he believed were not painting original art but rather a pastiche of Impressionist painting. Damning the work of these young men (particularly those working in Glasgow) he described their attempts to follow modern French art as “simply an impertinence”.⁵⁶ His remarks were read by many – including his friend Samuel Smiles, who wrote to Reid, congratulating him on the article.⁵⁷ In artistic circles, however, the piece had caused a storm of consternation that was seized upon by The Art Journal, which in April 1893 published the reactions of various artists and critics to Reid’s controversial remarks. They included Edward Stott, H.B.

⁵² See, for example, Ian Gale Arthur Melville Edinburgh 1996 p 51.

⁵³ Alexander Roche to James Pittendrigh Macgillivray 19 March 1896. James Pittendrigh Macgillivray MSS (National Library of Scotland Dep 349/106).

⁵⁴ This portrait is illustrated in G. Baldwin Brown’s The Glasgow School of Painters Glasgow 1907.

⁵⁵ George Reid to John Forbes White undated (see Appendix A).

⁵⁶ Westminster Gazette 4 February 1893.

Brabazon, George Clausen, W.R. Sickert and Fred Brown. The Glasgow artists whom Reid had criticised decided not to reply but Dr C. Blatherwick, President of the Glasgow Art Club, did so for them, writing "those who stick fast to their grooves, and assert with an assumption of authority that there is no Art in these new movements, because they do not understand them, simply put themselves in the same category as the missionaries who, because they could not understand the language of the new country, declared that the natives had no religion".⁵⁸ Whilst most of those quoted were prepared to sympathise with some elements of Reid's diatribe, they nevertheless wanted to take the opportunity to defend their fellow artists and to make it clear that Reid's views were outdated and ignorant.

Reid had welcomed the supplementary charter of 1891, which had conferred the right to increase the number of associate members, but by 1893 he was convinced that this had gone too far. Twenty-two new associates had been elected between March 1892 and March 1893, thus almost doubling the total number of associates. Reid feared for the decisions made by these young men – particularly when the academicians, because of their age, ill health or non-residence, were rarely represented in good number and were, consequently, largely ineffective. Reid wanted the number of associates to be limited to forty but this served to alienate him yet further from many younger artists, for whom change had by now become a necessity.

From April to September the affair dragged on with Reid's position as President becoming ever more difficult. Towards the end of September Reid sent a draft of his letter of resignation to James Irvine Smith and revealed that the whole affair had been a great worry to him for a long time.⁵⁹ Smith replied showing sympathy but also suggesting that Reid should temper the tone of his letter.⁶⁰ Mia Reid's hurried note to Irvine Smith reveals that Reid was reconciled to submitting his resignation but also that he was also determined to justify his actions and to explain his reasons for resignation. It also makes clear the fact that Reid continued to believe that his

⁵⁷ Samuel Smiles to George Reid 12 February 1893.

⁵⁸ *Art Journal* April 1893.

⁵⁹ George Reid to James Irvine Smith 17 September 1893.

⁶⁰ James Irvine Smith to George Reid to 23 September 1893.

resignation would be a significant loss to the Academy rather than an expedient move.⁶¹ Clearly some at the Academy agreed and efforts were made to retain Reid as president. Soon after his offer to resign was received a deputation comprising Sir Joseph Noel Paton, Hugh Cameron, J. Lawson Wingate and the secretary George Hay tried to persuade him not to do so and after much discussion Reid did eventually withdraw his resignation. They then addressed the question of associate membership and in order to keep the numbers steady decided that no associates should be elected in 1894 and 1895. In May of that year Reid paid himself for an alteration to the Charter, limiting the numbers as he had wished.

Reid had won the battle but lost the war. His position had been severely compromised by the preceding events and from then on, whilst the old guard at the Academy continued to support him, a groundswell of dissatisfaction amongst younger members began to rise. It was clear that a move was afoot to oust him as his position had become untenable and when, in 1902, Reid once again submitted his resignation it was accepted immediately. He was replaced by James Guthrie who was a more astute politician than Reid. Not only was he a popular choice with the younger artists. He recognised the need to court those in power and held little truck with Reid's democratic but somewhat naïve and puritanical views. He promptly reintroduced, for example, the annual dinner.

Guthrie's biographer, James L. Caw, did much to denigrate all the changes that Reid had instigated at the Academy and to credit the best of them to Guthrie. One week after his election, for example, Guthrie was asked about the transfer to other buildings - obviously the whole plan was well on by then and yet Caw assigned this achievement entirely to Guthrie - who oversaw, but did not instigate the move.⁶²

Reid moved to Oakhill, Somerset shortly after his retiral, where he continued to paint portraits and to live out the remainder of his days dictating to his wife his reminiscences. Doing so may have put him in mind once more of Aberdeen, for that same year he and White began plans for an massive extension to Aberdeen Art Gallery.

⁶¹ Mia Reid to James Irvine Smith 27 September 1893. Appendix A.

⁶² James L. Caw Sir James Guthrie PRSA London 1932 p 96.

7.7 The Death of John Forbes White

In spite of having sold a large proportion of his collection, in 1901 White was still able to lend nineteen pictures to the Glasgow International, including *The Dragon's Cavern* by Poole *The Staircase*, *Links House*, *Montrose* and *Aitchie* by Chalmers, the portrait of Jozef Israels painted jointly by Chalmers, Cameron & Reid, *Roses* by George Reid, *The Little Mother* by Jozef Israels, and several other oils and watercolours by Israels, Mollinger, Bosboom and Van Moer. He may have found it upsetting to see several other works that he had once owned on display there - *The End of the Harvest* by G.P. Chalmers was lent by James Aitken, his *Reflected Light* was lent by Sir William Arrol M.P. He may have been consoled, however, by the fact that three of his own early salt prints were included in the exhibition.

Another Aberdeen collector was coming to the fore at this time and lent *The Lady of Shallott* by J.W. Waterhouse. He was James Murray (1850-1933), who was soon to take over White's mantle as principal patron of the visual arts in North-East Scotland. As late as 1901 White was still arranging introductions to Israels and orchestrating commissions for him.⁶³ Over the next few years, however, his health declined and by May 1904 he was very ill. Reid wrote to him encouragingly, "We are glad to hear such... good accounts of your progress ...and (with this brighter weather) there will soon be a prospect of your going to the Cottage where one hopes recovery may be even more rapid. So cheer up, You may see more summers yet than you dream of!"⁶⁴ By 15th May White was too ill to write and Reid asked White's children to inform him on White's progress.⁶⁵ Through the summer White's condition worsened and, on 14th October 1904, he died.

White had retained his most beloved paintings or those most significant to his life as an art critic, but soon after his death much of the remainder of his collection was sold. The portrait of Israels, which had such particular significance for Aberdeen, was sold by White's family to Aberdeen Art Gallery in 1905. The paintings by Courbet and Diaz were also parted with shortly after White's death.

⁶³ Jozef Israels to John Forbes White 24 April 1901 (see Appendix A).

⁶⁴ George Reid to John Forbes White 15 May 1904.

⁶⁵ George Reid to John Forbes White 15 May 1904.

For the last three years of his life John Forbes White had been working on a plan to build on to Aberdeen Art Gallery sculpture courts in which could be displayed the best examples of Classical art, in the form of plaster casts. This temple of the arts and glorification of Ancient art could be seen as a fitting epitaph to this man who, for the last fifty years, had promoted art in the North-East and in so doing had transformed the lives and careers of so many. White never sought glory, however, and ultimately James Murray was instead credited with all aspects of the project.⁶⁶ Murray's contribution in the execution of White's plans was indeed significant but the conception and detailed planning of the building and its contents should be credited in their entirety to John Forbes White and George Reid. However, with White now dead his plans were taken on board by James Murray, who carried them to fruition two and a half years later. In April 1905 the new sculpture courts opened.

7.8 The Sculpture Courts at Aberdeen Art Gallery

Although White did not live to see the sculpture courts of Aberdeen Art Gallery open, the initial idea to build them had been his, or was at least instigated by him following discussion with James Pittendrigh Macgillivray, as is made clear in a letter from him to James Pittendrigh Macgillivray, written at the beginning of February 1902;

...We must not aim too high in the building towards the sky. We cannot do better than ...the Fitzwilliam Building for the Arts in Cambridge. The finest one I know in England - a winter palace with lazy palms...a museum for study for Art and for University influence - and for the good of the City - artistically - and for the higher development of the great trade in monumental work in Aberdeen. This must be a strong part of our claim for help for this Building - we see a way to a well paid Curator and Lecturer so as to make the place of living interest and useful to the community. You know well that Aberdeen will not rise to the level of this for Art alone.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ "Death of Sir James Murray" *Aberdeen Press and Journal* 13 April 1933 (see Appendix A).

⁶⁷ John Forbes White to James Pittendrigh Macgillivray 4 February 1902. James Pittendrigh Macgillivray MSS (National Library of Scotland Dep 349/67). Also amongst Macgillivray's papers is a newspaper article from *The People's Journal* 15 April 1905 in which the author indicates that the proposal, although credited in the printed catalogue to White, had first been mooted by Macgillivray in a local journal. This was in the context of debate about the introduction of a granite carving class in Aberdeen, at the School of Art, which adjoined the Art Gallery. Macgillivray had apparently made

White's emphasis on education was not only pragmatic. Education was also important to him. His main aim was to create a place where art could be admired and inspire the young artists working in the adjoining Gray's School of Art and also the granite carvers, so that they too could paint and sculpt in a modern way, but be inspired, as he had been, by the best examples from Ancient Greece.

A few weeks later, Reid wrote to White on the subject of the design of the building;

My dear JFW

I think the idea of a gallery of casts from the Antique and Renaissance artists looks a good one. The casts themselves don't cost much. What is wanted is a large, spacious, well-lighted building for their display.

It might be as plain as a barn - architecturally - if only it is large!⁶⁸

The final design was not, in fact, quite as "plain as a barn", but was, nevertheless, severely modelled, in a refined and essentially classical Renaissance style. The central court, archivolt and cornice mouldings were modelled on those of the Palazzo Vecchio, in Florence, whilst the balustrade was borrowed from that of the Cathedral Porch in Spoleto (pl. 93). The architect, A. Marshall Mackenzie, was catholic in his tastes, and was designing Marishal College at the same time in English Perpendicular. He was amenable to interpreting the ideas of White and Reid, whose preference was clearly for a simple, classical building. The trustees of the late Mr John Clark gave £8000 to the expense of the building, the total cost of which was £12000.

In Reid's speech to the life class students in Edinburgh in 1892 he had described the classical gymnasium as;

a great square - with porticoes - decorated with statues of gods and athletes - and generally near a spring - or a river - In the intervals of exercise the youths amused themselves and the passing citizen was free to enter at will - there were seats round the exercising ground - the Athenians went there to walk - to look at the young men, it was a place for talk - and later on Philosophy had its birthplace there.....

suggestions for specific acquisitions and had recommended the appointment of a professor of Carving on Continental lines. I am indebted to Helen Smailes for supplying me with the details of this press cutting.

⁶⁸ George Reid to John Forbes White 16 February 1902.

This description foretells the ultimate appearance of the sculpture courts, which one critic later described as "a veritable *salle greque* - simple, reposeful worthy - which one cannot regard without a feeling of reverence."⁶⁹

The colourful columns, each made of a different granite and topped with gilded composite capitals, were a concession to the granite merchants who donated them but echoed those at the Fitzwilliam, which are also of highly polished Aberdeen granite, with gilded capitals. They were the only polychromatic elements in the design,⁷⁰ however, and in all other respects Aberdeen's sculpture courts were completely unlike Edmond Barry's colourful and elaborate solution at the Fitzwilliam. By studying Greek art and life, White and Reid had arrived at something very modern - clean, clear white spaces with very little detailing.⁷¹ From this environment - an idyll amongst the realism of the north - they hoped to provide for art students the inspiration to depict the real world, the present, the land and people of their own country. In this forum, or gymnasium, they too could come and admire the perfect human form.

At the Fitzwilliam (and also perhaps at Manchester City Art Gallery, which had been designed by Sir Charles Barry in 1824) White might have seen a copy of the Parthenon frieze installed. At Aberdeen the building was almost designed around the frieze, which is an integral part of the design rather than an adjunct to it - set into the walls as a true procession rather than installed within a frame as at Manchester. This frieze - and all the other casts placed in the building - proclaimed the superiority of the Greeks and the beauty of the physical.

One hundred and sixty members of the public presented a further two hundred and thirty five casts at a cost totalling £3500. Not only the finest examples of Greek art were included. The selection of plaster casts was not only large but also varied. There were also casts of Egyptian, Assyrian, Italian, German, French and British works of art. Examples of lettering were included, because it was felt that the granite carvers especially would benefit from studying them. The main area of the sculpture court was,

⁶⁹ J.B. Manson "The Aberdeen Art Gallery" *The Studio* 1921 Vol. 82 p 248.

⁷⁰ Except that the walls were hung with green cloth.

⁷¹ White's love of innovative technology was recalled by the use, for the first time in Scotland, of inverted arc lamps.

however, filled with Greek and Roman sculpture – The Nike of Paenius, one of the Caryatids from the Erechtheion, the Belvedere Torso and, inevitably, The Venus de Milo. The Royal Academy presented a cast of the Venus of Knidos. The Italian work included examples of the work of the Pisani family, of Ghiberti, Donatello and Michelangelo. Nor was Gothic art forgotten and forty-nine architectural details and figures cast from Cathedrals in England, France and Italy were presented by the Architectural Association from the Royal Architectural Museum, Westminster.

Many of the casts were produced by the Brucciani firm (pl. 94),⁷² but Aberdeen's requirements were not limited to the casts that all other galleries and art schools would have desired. There was a distinctly Scottish element to the selection, with the inclusion of many casts of Celtic crosses and stones (pl. 95) - the originals of which Reid would first have come across on his early days at Keith and Gibb, where he had executed the lithographs for John Stuart's Sculptured Stones of Scotland which was published for The Spalding Club in 1856.

7.9 The Opening of the Sculpture Courts

The inauguration of these sculpture courts was a grand occasion. The day was hosted by Sir James Murray, who had been chairman of the Art Gallery Committee since 1901. In an excessive gesture of generosity Murray funded sixty-two guests to be transported from London to Aberdeen in a special train, which left Euston on the evening of Thursday 6th April. The guests included the novelist and poet Thomas Hardy, Professor J.B. Bury, the editor of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, Lord Reay, the Dutch novelist Maarten Maartens, poets Arthur Symons and William Watson as well as some six Royal Academicians. Commendatore Alberto Galli, who was Director-General of the Pontifical Museums and Galleries in Rome, acted as an envoy of the Pope and brought with him medals of Pope Pius X for Murray. Representatives of every major national newspaper were also included on the guest list.

⁷² Founded by Domenico Brucciani (1815-1880), a native of Lucca, in 1837 the firm Brucciani supplied casts to the Government School of Design, the precursor of the South Kensington, later Victoria and Albert Museum, and to many schools of Art and art galleries throughout Britain.

After the official opening of the Sculpture Gallery George Reid gave the opening speech and in another address, drawn up by Maarten Maartens, eloquent tribute was paid to the generosity of Sir James and to his love of art. The Corporation hosted a dinner at the Town House where long congratulatory speeches went on till after midnight.

The following day Murray provided the guests with both lunch and dinner at the Grand Hotel. All the guests also went to the graduation evening reception in the Mitchell Hall, where six of them, including Thomas Hardy, Commendatore Galli and Edward Robinson, Director of the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, received honorary degrees.⁷³

John Bulloch, the editor of the local paper and one of Reid's oldest friends,⁷⁴ knew Hardy, and it is likely that he put his name forward, both for the honorary degree and on the invitation list for the opening of the Sculpture Courts.⁷⁵ Hardy seemed pleased with the experience⁷⁶ and wrote a poem on his return about his visit and the warmth of the welcome. Had White been alive he would no doubt have found the presence of Hardy highly appropriate, for Hardy's writings, with their realistic and bleak depictions of the heroic peasant, echoed closely the art which White had brought into Scotland forty years before: it was realism, not idealism, rooted in truth to nature, that White admired in both classical and modern art.

Bulloch correctly credits the idea of the plaster cast collection and sculpture court to White but states that the plan was realised because of Murray's efforts and that he was aided and advised by William Ramsay, professor of Humanity at Aberdeen University.⁷⁷ George Reid and Robert Martin, of the Victoria and Albert Museum also contributed to both the selection of the casts and their accurate and detailed cataloguing. Murray's role was rather one of an administrator and promoter of the scheme – he organised the funding of the casts and himself financed the much

⁷³ Martin Ray "Thomas Hardy in Aberdeen" Aberdeen University Review no 193 Spring 1995.

⁷⁴ John Malcolm Bulloch (1867-1938) was also the author of A History of The University of Aberdeen, 1495-1895 London 1895 and George Jamesone -The Scottish van Dyck Edinburgh 1885.

⁷⁵ Aberdeen Daily Journal 15 March 1905 p 5.

⁷⁶ Alexander Mackintosh, "The Art and hospitality of Aberdeen: Impressions of an English Visitor", Aberdeen Free Press 10 April 1905 p 6.

⁷⁷ J.B. Bulloch "Studio Talk - Aberdeen" The Studio Vol. XXXV 1965 pp 155-157.

publicised opening.⁷⁸ Bulloch ends his account of the opening of the sculpture courts and Murray's part in it, by stating that "but for the daring and inspiring enthusiasm of one man [i.e. Murray] it would still be *in nubibus*."⁷⁹ His summary is, in once sense, correct, but more importantly, but for White's idea the project would never have begun, let alone have been realised. It is to White, who had proudly displayed a life-size cast of the Venus de Milo in the hall of his house at 269 Union Street for the last forty years and who had extolled the use of plaster casts over twenty years before,⁸⁰ who was ultimately responsible for the erection of this magnificent building. It was not the "energy and clear-sightedness"⁸¹ of Murray that led to the sculpture courts being built. Ultimately, this marvellous building and its collection of plaster casts had its roots in White's vision and Blackie's inspired teaching of half a century before.

⁷⁸ "Death of Sir James Murray" Aberdeen Press and Journal 13 April 1933 (see Appendix A).

⁷⁹ J.B. Bulloch *op.cit.* p 157.

⁸⁰ John Forbes White How Can Art be Best Introduced into the Homes of Persons of Limited Income? A Paper read before the National Association for the promotion of Social Science 21st Annual Congress, Aberdeen 19-26 September 1877, Aberdeen Free Press 1877.

⁸¹ J.B. Bulloch *op. cit.* p 246.

Epilogue
Sir James Murray

Sir James Murray

James Murray had been born in Woodside, an industrial area of Aberdeen where his father worked as a hide factor and American produce broker. Murray's education was limited, although for a number of years he attended the Old Aberdeen Gymnasium. He matriculated at King's College in 1868, where he studied medicine for one year but, failing his second year, he dropped out and then worked in London and Liverpool as a representative for the American cattle company G.H. Hammond, a venture which seems to have contributed greatly to his wealth. In 1884 he returned to Aberdeen to take over the management of his father's business in the hide, tallow and flesher business. He was also, briefly, a Liberal politician.

Murray seems to have felt keenly his lack of education. At a political address at Maud in 1906 he had described himself as "terribly in earnest", a phrase which sums up his dealings in art as much as in politics; he was indeed earnest rather than inspired. Murray apparently visited most British and many Continental galleries, studied their contents and administrative systems, and conferred with the directors. During one summer he spent ninety consecutive days studying the pictures in the National Gallery. Having done this he then felt in a position to enlighten the heathens of the north, as he revealed in an unguarded moment, when in the company of fellow Aberdonians; "I had an intriguing sidelight lately on Sir James Murray, from Robert Allan's wife," wrote James Cadenhead to James Pittendrigh Macgillivray, "He is a neighbour of the Allans in London, and had been trying to impress Mrs Allan. She had gathered from him that Aberdeen when he took it in hand was in a wretchedly retrograde state, and that there was not there, and never had been anyone there, who knew anything about art, and that he is just beginning to rectify the situation and spread the light."¹

Clearly Murray had great pride in his abilities as a collector, but like Macdonald, he became somewhat of a laughing stock amongst artists who regarded his comments as both arrogant and ignorant. Nevertheless Murray did support the arts

¹ James Cadenhead to James Pittendrigh Macgillivray 3 February 1918. James Pittendrigh Macgillivray MSS (National Library of Scotland Dept 349/9) (see Appendix A).

in Aberdeen, establishing a purchasing fund for Aberdeen Art Gallery, overseeing the extension of the galleries and filling his own home, Glenburnie, with many notable works of art. As Macdonald had done forty years before, initially Murray stuck to safe ground, buying the work of established artists, many of whom were academicians. They included paintings by Orchardson, Pettie, Waterhouse, La Thangue, Peter Graham and George Harvey as well as pictures of an earlier period by David Cox, and John Phillip. In addition, there were historic miniatures and pieces of sculpture by Onslow Ford and J.P. MacGillivray.

Murray acquired many of the paintings that had once belonged to White. He owned Reid's self portrait of 1882, which had been painted for White. He also acquired *The Dragon's Cavern* by Poole and several of White's family portraits, including Chalmers' portrait of Rachel White (pl. 24). Significantly he owned a small portrait of J. S. Blackie by George Reid (AAG) and he also owned paintings by Reid - of Dunblane and Durham. These purchases might be seen to suggest that Murray secretly wished to carry on White's legacy as benefactor and major patron of the North East. This supposition is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that he acquired a recent work by the now very elderly W.Q. Orchardson, *Feeding the Pigeons* (AAG) almost undoubtedly in emulation of White's ownership of a much earlier, but very similar painting by Orchardson, *The Farmer's Daughter*, which White had bought shortly after it was painted in 1881. Murray also collected the work of Corot, Courbet and Diaz, and of the Hague School artists - Blommers, Israels, James and Matthew Maris and Anton Mauve.

Murray's tastes, however, were not appreciated by all and on that momentous day in 1905 when he had taken his honoured and fêted guests for a tour of his home, Glenburnie, in Rubislaw Den, he was taken aback by Symons "eloquent silence" in the presence of the array of the R.A.'s and R.S.A.'s showy productions". In that instant Murray determined to part with many of these paintings. The paintings that White had held so dear were sold, or given away, with apparently no regret but rather with relief by Murray and, in 1922, Mason could note how Murray's collection had "reached its present perfection by judicious pruning [and] by the constant addition of

rarer blooms, and the ruthless rejection of sickly plants.”² Murray, it seems, felt himself to be on a steep learning curve and admitted to injudicious purchases which he later happily rejected.³ This is quite at variance with White, who treasured old possessions and was loathe to part with anything.

Thus it was that in 1910 Murray presented to Aberdeen Art Gallery Committee a series of twenty paintings and a further ten paintings in 1920.

Those early works with which he did not part - by Swan, Orchardson and Pettie - he kept at Glenburnie, whilst in his London home he displayed his newer purchases. Arthur Symons continued to have an affect on his choices - he bought Monticelli's work not so much because he admired it himself, but because he had been swayed by Symons' admiration of it.⁴ Unlike White, Murray bought from obvious sources - usually London dealers such as The Fine Art Society, Bois, Connell, Bateson, Atkinson, Knoedler and Wallis.

Thus, having abandoned the work of living academicians Murray acquired *The Railway Carriage* 1864 by Honoré Daumier (National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa), the most finished of many versions and studies of the same subject. He bought Rossetti's study of Fanny Cornforth against a background of marigolds; *Bocca Baciata* of 1859 (Suzette M. Zurcher 1971), *Mariana in the South* of c.1896-7 by Waterhouse (Private Collection) and also his *The Lady of Shallott* (Leger 1971). He also owned a remarkable, Pontormesque portrait of Burne-Jones by Alphonse Legros. He acquired *La Falaise à Fécamps* by Claude Monet (AAG) and a painting of two dancers by Degas (London, Courtauld Institute Galleries). He also owned *The Bridge at Sèvres* c.1877 by Alfred Sisley (Tate Gallery) and work by Pissarro and Segantini. Less judiciously (though he did not suffer from the mistake) Murray bought a painting which at the time was thought to be by Van Gogh, *A Vase of Flowers, Poppies, Daisies and Cornflowers* (untraced).⁵

² J.B. Manson "Some Pictures and Drawings in Sir James Murray's Collection" *The Studio* 1922 Vol. 83 p 61.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ This painting was included in Faille's catalogue of 1928 but two years later the author had changed his mind about the authenticity of the work and it was included in *Faux Van Gogh* of 1930 and as a Wacker fake in the 1970 edition.

Although initially Murray did not buy from artists, as his confidence increased, he began to do so, although his relationships with the artists whom he knew was clearly not one of camaraderie, as it had been for White. Murray regarded artists with suspicion and saw his purchases in terms of a financial transaction rather than patronage in its broadest sense. Murray "had to go on his knees to persuade [Augustus] John to do Lloyd George for him," wrote Cadenhead to Macgillivray, "and had been obliged to buy another very expensive picture from him to put him in a good humour."⁶ Murray owned several works by Augustus John which could have filled this description; one, a study of Dorelia, entitled *The Woman in the Sealskin Coat* (untraced),⁷ another the bright and brilliant *The Blue Pool* (AAG).

Murray's entire collection was exhibited at Aberdeen Art Gallery, when further extensions were officially opened by HM King George V in 1925. Murray was knighted that year and in 1926 he donated Lavery's *A Tennis Party* (pl. 72) to the Gallery. This painting, which he had bought three years earlier, had been exhibited in Aberdeen in 1888. Indeed it may have been in the Aberdeen Artists Society Exhibition that Murray had first seen it. It had not been for sale at the time, but two years later, when exhibited in Munich, it was acquired by the Bavarian State for 4600 marks. After the First World War it passed to the Galerie Heinemann in Munich, in exchange for another picture.⁸

This gift proved to be a prelude to Murray deciding to sell or give away most of his collection. He had three sons and two daughters, yet decided to donate to Aberdeen Art Gallery a sizeable proportion of the collection.

The sale of Murray's paintings was held on Friday 29th April 1927 at Christies, London. For the one hundred and three pictures in the sale a total of £69,877 10s was realised. The sale attracted much attention and many of the works found suitable buyers. *The Bridge at Sèvres* c.1877 by Alfred Sisley, for example, was purchased for the Tate Gallery.

⁶ James Cadenhead to James Pittendrigh Macgillivray 3 February 1918. James Pittendrigh Macgillivray MSS (National Library of Scotland Dept 349/9) (see Appendix A).

⁷ This painting is reproduced in *The Studio* 1921 Vol. 82 p 193 and again in *The Art of Augustus John* by M. Easton and M. Holroyd London 1974 p 151 as *The Red Feather*.

⁸ Correspondence with Dr Herbert W. Rott, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen 27 August 1996.

Before the sale Murray had donated the pictures to Aberdeen Art Gallery which, having once been White's, could be deemed to be the legacy of the city. They included Chalmers' portrait *Aitchie*, and Reid's painting of *J.S. Blackie, Durham, Dunblane* and his self portrait. Of the works that were included in the sale nine paintings were bought by Aberdeen Art Gallery at a cost of £14,076 10s. When the sale was over Murray sold to the Gallery, for a nominal sum, a further eight pictures. The total of seventeen works included the magnificent Bastien-Lepage, *Going to School*, which had been in Staats Forbes' collection and sold after his death on 14 October 1904, along with paintings by Eugène Carrière, Gustave Courbet, Alexandre Decamps, Charles Emile Jacques and Constant Troyon. There were also works by Giovanni Segantini, Matthew and Jacob Maris, Waterhouse, Augustus John, Swan and Orpen.

Manson had recorded that Murray, recognising his own early liability to error, had given to the schools of Aberdeen a sizeable collection of reproductions of great masterpieces and drawings to the schools of Aberdeen, in order that the pupils could become acquainted with the quality of genuine art, and, unlike Murray on occasion, knowing the real, "may be able to avoid the meretricious."⁹ Murray also established a purchasing Fund for the Art Gallery and gave to the schools of the city a further fund to purchase prizes for children who wrote essays on the reproductions that he had supplied.

When Sir James was appointed to the chairmanship of Aberdeen Art Gallery it had been dependant upon public subscriptions and admission fees for its maintenance, and its whole income amounted to no more than £150 a year. There was no provision made for the purchases of pictures and Murray succeeded in reversing the fortunes of both the Art Gallery and the Artist's Society, placing them both on a firm financial basis - something White had no talent for, nor interest in.

In spite of the indubitably significant part Murray played in the stabilising of such institutions, however, he was an uninspired collector, who quickly tired of, or became embarrassed by his acquisitions. He was lauded during his lifetime – more than White ever was – but was not admired by the artists whom he knew. His belief that he had brought art and culture to Aberdeen was totally unfounded and

contradicted by the fact that he endeavoured to carry on White's legacy – to buy the paintings that he had once owned and to complete and furnish the civic building that had been conceived by White.

As Murray was in the throes of giving away his collection to the city other collectors, notably Middleton and Sir Thomas Jaffrey (1860-1953) were building up yet further significant collections of art in Aberdeen. In the case of Middleton, who ran a printing business, the collection was remarkable in quality – he owned the finest examples of works by Matisse, Modigliani, Utrillo, Derain and Vuillard. Middleton, however, like Murray and Jaffrey used dealers and rarely, if ever, bought directly from the artists. Only John Forbes White could be credited with not only collecting important contemporary art, but in encouraging artists to interact, to look at each other's work and be fundamentally affected by the experience. It was White alone amongst the collectors of Scotland who strove to promote the art that he admired and to change art in Scotland and ultimately, England in a direct and most fundamental way.

⁹ Manson *op. cit.* p 70-71.

CONCLUSION

The dawn of a new age was heralded when Stravinsky's Rite of Spring was performed for the first time in 1913. On 9th February of the same year the end of another, very different era was marked by the death of George Reid. Since the previous May, Reid had passed his days dictating his autobiography to his wife. The manuscript survived but, unlike those of Lavery, McTaggart, Guthrie and Orchardson, there was by then no widespread interest in Reid's life story and the proposed book was never published. Instead, a new generation of writers began to set down accounts and theories on the history of 19th century Scottish art, accounts that established the general pattern of writing on the subject for decades to come. To a large extent, in many of these books the vital role that John Forbes White and George Reid had played in this development was played down, whilst that of the next generation of artists – whom these two men had so encouraged and influenced – was highlighted.

In particular, it was the Glasgow Boys who were lauded most highly. The early patronage and support of White and Reid of many of these artists was entirely ignored by Billcliffe, for example, who relates how the Boys had found their "*new celebrity* somewhat galling after their treatment by collectors and officialdom during the 1880s".¹ In Glasgow these artists had difficulty in selling their work² but in Aberdeen, throughout the 1880s, they had found some of their most willing patrons. The Glasgow Boys had not been "discovered" at The Grosvenor Gallery in the summer of 1890. Their work had been understood, appreciated and perhaps most importantly exhibited and bought by patrons and peers in the North East of Scotland from the very start of their careers.

In many ways Brown's much earlier account of the Glasgow School is more balanced. He begins by warning his reader not to attach to the term too definite a meaning, stating that it was "in no sense as a shibboleth and least of all a war cry".³ These artists were never a tightly knit, finite and isolated group, immune to all around them and championing a cause that decried the past. Inevitably they stood on the

¹ Roger Billcliffe The Glasgow Boys London 1985 p 7.

² Alexander Reid opened his gallery in Glasgow in 1889 and only became the Glasgow Boys' dealer thereafter, almost a decade later than his first purchase by a "Glasgow Boy".

³ G. Baldwin Brown The Glasgow School of Painters Glasgow 1907 p 1.

shoulders of those who preceded them. They were as dependent on their immediate predecessors as on each other. These Glasgow artists were not isolated from other artists in Scotland; the interactions were many and varied. It was William Leiper, for example, who had been so closely associated with George Reid over many years, who in 1898 recommended that Henry, Roche, Lavery and Walton be awarded the commission to decorate the Banqueting Hall of the new municipal buildings in Glasgow. White bought their first pictures, Archy Reid hung their work in the annual exhibitions of the Aberdeen Artists Society and George Reid voted for their election to the Royal Scottish Academy.

Yet, by implication and default, White and Reid's stars were eclipsed by the fame of the Glasgow Boys. Writing in 1985, Billcliffe makes no mention at all of John Forbes White, nor of the vital role that he and the city of Aberdeen were to play in the development and international success of the artists in question. This can be explained in part by the fact that the catalogues of the exhibitions held in Aberdeen – by the Aberdeen Artists Society and other organisations – have not been compiled, and, consequently the details of works exhibited there were not generally available. Yet this was a serious omission, for, to some extent, Aberdeen can lay claim to be the city where Scottish art criticism began and where modern art came into the country.

As early as 1880 The Baillie had reported that "against Glasgow and Glasgow painters the animus is particularly strong... the authorities of the RSA have all along done their best to discourage Glasgow Art".⁴ Billcliffe reinforced this belief when he referred to petty jealousies within the Royal Scottish Academy, its members closing rank and "effectively making it impossible for any artist to join the body of Academicians and Associates without first setting up residence in Edinburgh."⁵ Caw too describes how the Academy was "impossibly conventional and hide-bound" and only interested in itself and Edinburgh.⁶ As has been seen, however, Reid had made every effort to transform the Royal Scottish Academy. As a result the walls of the Academy, like those of Aberdeen Art Gallery, had been hung with the work of many young and innovative artists, both those based in Glasgow and those from elsewhere.⁷

⁴ The Baillie 17 November 1880.

⁵ Billcliffe *op. cit.* p 12.

⁶ See Caw Sir James Guthrie PRSA London 1932. p 32.

⁷ Whilst Guthrie exhibited at the Glasgow Institute five years earlier than he did at the Scottish Academy, Lavery exhibited at the Glasgow Institute in 1880 and in Edinburgh the following year. Walton exhibited his work in Glasgow in 1878 and in Edinburgh just two years later.

They were also elected to the Royal Scottish Academy at roughly the same age as Reid and his contemporaries had been (on average they became associates at the age of twenty-nine). Reid like White, was a champion of many younger artists, including James Guthrie and Arthur Melville, whose work he is known to have admired. His later reactionary views on some younger artists⁸ came to obscure his own important contribution to the work that they came to create and which he is known to have admired. In fact his most controversial and, therefore, best-remembered, pronouncements were made at a time when, as President of the Royal Scottish Academy, he was attempting to retain the quality of that institution when other bodies, particularly the Scottish Society of Artists, was providing a very plausible alternative for young aspiring artists. Reid's sympathies, however, were never entirely clear.⁹ Yet in spite of this fact, by many writers, George Reid had come to symbolise the establishment, against which these young artists were battling.

Perhaps inevitably Reid's later obduracy clouded the importance of his early achievements and lessened the recognition of the significance of his relationship with White. This association had proved to be far more than mere friendship or the meeting of like minds. In terms of the dynamic force created by it in the early years, White's relationship with Reid had resembled that of Engels and Marx, in that the shared thoughts of teacher and pupil transformed the course of events. The influence of these two men even touched on the careers and artistic styles of artists who are not normally associated with the modern movement, such as John Everett Millais. *Chill October* is, essentially, a Scottish picture, not just in terms of its setting, but also in the fact that it is deeply indebted to Mollinger and Roelofs, to the paintings that Millais would have seen in the houses of his Scottish friends, to a style of art that had not changed the way other English artists painted at the time (1870) but had changed Millais' art in a fundamental way. His unique position as an English artist, working in Scotland and influenced by the Scottish art scene, changed his art and, because of the stature that he held throughout Britain, allowed him in turn to transform landscape painting in England. Not only Scottish artists became "Chill Octobered" (to use Reid's phrase),¹⁰ it was soon a phenomenon seen south of the border too. Thus Millais, through his

⁸ Reid writing in the Westminster Gazette 4 February 1893 and quoted in Agnes Mackay Arthur Melville Leigh-on-Sea 1951 p 71.

⁹ Reid joined the Scottish Society of Artists the year that it was established.

¹⁰ George Reid to John Forbes White 9 February 1886.

contact with Macdonald and White and the artists who gathered around them, formed yet one more vital link in the chain of influence that came to change English art.

White's close connections with, and influence on, successive generations of Scottish artists had a marked effect on their work, an effect which, because of its complexity, cannot easily be accounted for by other factors (the artists' training, their time spent abroad, the influence of paintings that they saw on display). White relished his role in bringing artists together and affecting their art thus, writing; "it is by such interchange of ideas that new life is given to schools, the torch is handed on from hand to hand. When older methods have become worn out, new influences restore vitality, and art becomes regenerated".¹¹

Like John Stuart Blackie, John Forbes White was an inspired facilitator for change, whose beliefs were built on what had gone before him - only through an intimate knowledge of the past could he so consummately understand and interpret the present. He advocated to the young artists whom he knew his favoured combination of an understanding of ancient art with a practice of the newest styles and techniques. Thus he believed that these men would create an ideal, perfect art which was contemporary, but was also rooted in the Greek culture which had nurtured his own imagination.¹² Apart from the notable exception of Corot (and less so, Poole) the art that White espoused depicted the real world; it did not concern itself with romanticised memories of ancient lands but (in the same way that the ancient Greeks had used the men and women around them as their models) instead portrayed real figures of the present. Thus Blackie's fresh methods of teaching his young pupils in the 1840s went on to have an effect on modern art, on the ability of White, and subsequently on Reid, to accept Realism so readily.

This capturing the impression of real time has been a vital element in the art of numerous artists, and was much discussed at the time, especially in France. When Gustave Courbet's work had been rejected from the Salon in 1855, for example, and he had held his own exhibition, he declared in the catalogue that his artistic purpose was "to translate the manners, the ideas, and the outward appearance of my age as I

¹¹ John Forbes White Pictures by John Lavery The Goupil Gallery, London June 1891 p 6.

¹² There are parallels with Zola who, though a champion of modern art, owned nineteen pieces of ancient sculpture and, like White, a copy of the Venus de Milo. He too saw contemporary artists as following in the footsteps of the ancients and the Old Masters. See William Kloss "Émile Zola and the Old Masters" Émile Zola and the Arts (editors Jean-Max Guieu, & Alison Hilton) Georgetown University Press 1988 p 36.

perceived them, in a word, to create living art."¹³ This emphasis on capturing the impression of a scene explains, in part, White's admiration for the work of Courbet and also for that of Corot, the grand simplificateur, for Corot's principle declared aim had been to capture the impression of a scene – real or imagined. The French art critic Clément had understood and identified with Corot's principle aim, "to render the impression naïvely", and furthermore emphasised his limited use of brushwork, suggesting that too much paint might "hide the poetic thought".¹⁴ Such beliefs see a very clear echo in White's writings. He champions simplicity in the work of George Paul Chalmers – his "simple dash of yellow"¹⁵ and he admires John Lavery because "he stops when he has realised his idea, wearying it neither by detail nor by excess of so-called finish."¹⁶ White's views on finish were not new – indeed they had been expounded by Émile Zola as early as the mid 1860s, but he was the first Scot to expound such views (decades before the article on Lavery was written) and his views, boldly and confidently expounded at the gatherings of artists at his homes in Aberdeen and Dundee and in various articles, such as his review of the Royal Academy exhibition of 1873, went on to influence others. Alexander Roche, for example, gave a paper at the 1889 art congress in Edinburgh on the subject of finish in art, in which he reiterated the previously described views of White. Indeed as early as 1885 the art critic Walter Armstrong remarked upon the way Scottish artists, unlike their English counterparts, had made what he described as "direct" or "rough" painting "the distinguishing character of the Scottish School"¹⁷

It was Corot's atmospheric unity of vision that White so admired (as did Monet). Harmony and unity are qualities constantly cited as worthy aims by French critics of the day, including Thoré, especially with reference to Corot's work. White always seemed more in tune with the views of these men than with British critics such as Ruskin, who had once so offended him by returning a review that White had sent him with some less than kind comments,¹⁸ and whose views on art can perhaps be

¹³ Courbet's words, which came to be regarded almost as a manifesto of Realism, prefaced the catalogue of his exhibition, held in Avenue Montaigne in 1855.

¹⁴ Charles Clément "Exposition de 1847" Paris 1847 pp 94-96 quoted by Richard Shiff in "Corot and the Painter's mark – Natural, personal, pictorial" *Apollo* May 1998 p 4.

¹⁵ Richard Shiff *op. cit.* p 52.

¹⁶ John Forbes White *Pictures by John Lavery* The Goupil Gallery, London June 1891 p 7. This was quite at variance with Ruskin, who had written "You may depend upon it, when you are dissatisfied with your work it is always too coarse or too uneven"..."its edges are not true enough in outline, and its shades are in blotches, or scratches" (Ruskin *Elements of Drawing* p 51).

¹⁷ Walter Armstrong "Colin Hunter ARA" *Art Journal* 1885 p 118.

¹⁸ The author in conversation with White's descendants.

summed up by his well-known proclamation, "I wholly deny that the impressions of beauty are in any way sensual: they are neither sensual nor intellectual, but moral."¹⁹ For White, beauty was never moral and always both sensual and intellectual.

As Richard Shiff²⁰ so eloquently explains, it is the strange combination of harmony and "awkwardness" in Corot's work that places him in the fold of the Impressionists and sets him apart from more academic painters of his day. These two qualities, combined in Corot's work and subsequently that of Guthrie, Melville, Lavery and Stott, were also valued and appreciated by White, who understood the modernity of such an apparently unlikely marriage. White did not share with Flaubert, Baudelaire, Courbet and Millet an alienation from a classical past (nor their perception of social dislocation). Instead, like Renoir, White admired the way in which Corot fused his vision of nature with the classical tradition in his later, large and evocative "memory-paintings" such as his own *Pastorale, Souvenir d'Italie*.

On the poetic element White declared, when writing on Mason, that, "with Breton he shares the rich imagination that constructs great pictures out of the simplest scenes of rustic life, that sees deep poetry in the most ordinary things."²¹ White's poetic sensibility saw beauty in all things, both in nature and art, until "a blade of grass could make him weep"²² and he would, with emotions rooted in pathos rather than sentimentality, even "kiss a dead bird" in grief for the loss.²³

In 1847 Thoré was championing artists who rejected the teachings of the art schools, their traditions and their compositional and stylistic conventions.²⁴ This individualistic freedom Corot emphasised when describing his own working methods.²⁵ White equally admired the skilful technique of the Glasgow Painters, who were "bound together not by the strict rules of a school, but rather by common principles of colour, harmony, and decorative effect".²⁶ Also like Clément, and also

¹⁹ John Ruskin *Modern Painters* Vol. II Chap. II p1.

²⁰ Richard Shiff *op.cit.*

²¹ John Forbes White "The Pictures of the late George Mason ARA" *The Contemporary Review* April 1873 pp 735-736.

²² W. K. Leask "John Forbes White" *Aberdeen University Review* Vol. VI 1919 p 49.

²³ W.K. Leask *op. cit.* p47.

²⁴ Théophile Thoré "Salon de 1847" in *Les Salons* 3 vols. Brussels 1893 pp 538-39 quoted by Richard Shiff *op. cit.* p 5.

²⁵ Statements reported by Alfred Robaut (see Courthion *Corot raconté* vol. I pp 84 & 88) and quoted by Richard Shiff *op.cit* p 6.

²⁶ John Forbes White *Pictures by John Lavery* The Goupil Gallery, London June 1891 p 5.

Zola²⁷, was White's insistence on the fact that such apparently naïve art retained the imprint of the artist's own personal mark, which identifies his work from that of any other artist. This too, White admired in Lavery's work, when he wrote of him that "above all things he is strictly personal and can be mistaken for no one else".²⁸ Such individualism and freedom of expression was wholly in accord with White's cultural upbringing under the individualistic Blackie, whose own views on religion, politics and art prefigured what would soon become an ever less regulated, more freethinking Britain. Ruskin had seen Turner as an artist who rebelled against the rules of drawing, for which he substituted "the principle of love" and "the primacy of vision". He saw in him "a seeing, feeling, creature". White shared with Ruskin the fundamental belief that true art was determined by the senses - that is what one feels, not by the imitation of what one merely sees. Yet in more general terms his art criticism was fundamentally different from that of White. White, for example, did not share Ruskin's concern to see art as closely connected with the state of society, nor his emphasis on a spiritual justification for landscape, nor indeed his belief that an artist is judged great only in his ability to depict the familiar.²⁹ White's fundamental understanding of the simplicity and fundamental nature of modern art was still a rare thing. In his article on Lavery, he had clearly felt the need to explain to his readers such beliefs in minute detail. It is White's understanding of modern art, but also his empathy with modern, and particularly French, art criticism, that sets him apart in a fundamental way from many of his British contemporaries, who failed to see the significance of Realist art, choosing instead to decry it as European and, therefore, uncivilised.

Like Goethe, White was intensely aware of the modern culture around him. He was not Janus-faced like many other industrialist-collectors who, though forward looking in industry, preferred old fashioned, backward looking art. Instead he had an urgent sense of the emergence of the modern world – not just in art but also in science, politics and religion. Blackie had once advocated ending the anti-art element of the Presbyterian religion and indeed promoting religious art.³⁰ He was no more

²⁷ There is no firm evidence that White had ever read Zola's famous article, published in *L'Evenement* in 1867 in defence of Manet but he agreed with its tenets, including that the artist's vision was subjective and dependent on his own personal impression and that consequently, as Zola had put it, that "a work is a corner of nature seen through a temperament".

²⁸ John Forbes White *op. cit.* p 7.

²⁹ John Ruskin *Modern Painters* Part 1 General Principles p120.

³⁰ J.S. Blackie *On Beauty* Edinburgh 1858 pp 103-4.

constrained by the religious straight jacket of Scottish Presbyterianism than was White by established precepts in art. Their views – which so closely aligned them to the semantic scholar William Robertson Smith and to the author William Alexander – meant that they viewed the world with enlightened eyes, which inevitably affected their taste in art. They admired free-thinking and advocated individual freedoms. The social and cultural changes underlying the reception of Realist painting have parallels in the socialist movement and related literature of the time, such as William Alexander's doric classic, Johnny Gibb of Gushetneuk of 1880 which may well have been affected by the new art flooding into Scotland, and that brought into Aberdeen by Alexander's closest friends.

Both Blackie and William Robertson Smith had refused to accept the current, accepted, literal interpretations of the bible and both men suffered as a result (for Smith it meant the end of his university career). There is a clear parallel between their questioning of such established precepts – and in their refusal to compromise – and in Blackie and White's refusal to be constrained by artistic dogma. For them an impression captured was infinitely superior to the depiction of a literal truth.

There was a sort of mad passion about White's acquisitions - buying the contents of Mollinger's studio, buying Corot's work when patently he could not afford it and persuading his friends to buy when he was finally threatened with bankruptcy. Caw argues that early collectors of Dutch art parted with their paintings because the pictures had gone up in value.³¹ White did not want a quick profit. Instead he found his forced parting from his collection heart-rending. As Tolstoy once said of Ruskin, White thought with his heart. In fact when comparing Ruskin's writings on art to those of White, Ruskin comes across as far more analytical. Even when eulogising about Turner's artistry his concern is with how the master has managed to depict objects or natural phenomena almost in spite of his apparent spontaneity. With White it is the very spontaneity that he admires, rather than the artist's ability to depict accurately a particular scene or subject. Nevertheless White was certainly aware of Ruskin's work and indeed sought his approbation, though did not receive it.³²

³¹ James L. Caw Catalogue of the Collection of Pictures of the British, French & Dutch Schools belonging to John Reid with notes by James Caw 1913 p vii.

³² George Reid to John Forbes White 13 January 1871.

In Faust Goethe analyses the powerful dynamism of an emerging individualistic culture. Like Goethe, White was a passionate humanist, passionate about the achievements of man and passionate too that each day should be grasped and utilised to the full. "Edenke zu leben" (to be mindful to live) was the motto adorning the Hall of the Past where the funeral of the poetic waif Mignon takes place in Goethe's Wilhelm Meister's Lehrjahre. In the last line of one of his late poems, with marvellous colloquial ease, Goethe writes, "Wie es auch sei, das Leben, es ist gut" (How ever it may be, life, it is good). Both mottoes could equally sum up the life of John Forbes White. White had been given a bronze bust of Goethe and a lock of his hair by J.S. Blackie³³ – both men shared a lifelong admiration for his writings and beliefs. In reading Goethe White too came to acquire a lust for life and a passion for all things.³⁴ This is the quality that he exhibited most clearly and which determined all that he did and with which he managed to enthuse and influence the eager young artists around him.

When Jason Rosenfeld asked "is it just a coincidence that native British painting of the second half of the nineteenth century is, finally, so very "un-European"³⁵ he should have restricted his rhetorical question to English rather than British painting. Through his knowledge of the Ancient Greeks, German literature and French and Dutch artists and art criticism, White, with the help of John Stuart Blackie, George Reid and Alexander Macdonald, had turned Scottish art away from England's preferred impression of it as "Caledonia, Stern and Wild" and towards Europe, where it truly belonged.

³³ Blackie had in turn been given the head and lock of hair by Frau Goethe.

³⁴ This passion is recalled in Patrick Geddes' eulogy to Blackie; "Where then lies the true patriotism? As in olden warfare, primarily in energy for living...Living Scotland – living Greece" Patrick Geddes "The Scots Renaissance" The Evergreen Spring 1895 p 134.

³⁵ Jason Rosenfeld "Exhibition Reviews - The Victorians in Washington" Apollo May 1997 p 73.

APPENDIX A

Related Letters and Text

(Unless stated otherwise, all letters and correspondence quoted are in the collections of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums).

1864

December/January 1864

George Paul Chalmers to Alexander Walker

(This letter, and also the one quoted below, was attached to Alexander Walker's copy of George Paul Chalmers RSA by John Forbes White & Alexander Gibson Edinburgh 1879, which was given to Walker by John Forbes White on 5 March 1881.)

Scott's Lodging
13 Pitt Street
Edinburgh
Thursday

Dear Sir,

I wish you the compliments of the season - Mr Reid informs me that you are inclined to have a small bit by me - I shall be delighted to execute a little subject for you if you would give me a notion what you would like -

I have a little bit of window (the study from Haddon Hall) Reid was suggesting to paint a figure - a young girl (always interesting) reading - I merely hint this - Pray do let me hear from you

Yours v[er]y faithfully
G.P. Chalmers
13 Pitt Street

1865

13 August 1865

George Paul Chalmers to Alexander Walker

My dear sir

I ought to have acknowledged receipt of your very kind letter with enclosed bank letter long before this but was prevented from doing so by many circumstances. I sincerely trust you will pardon my seeming neglect & accept of my grateful thanks for the 8 guineas first, secondly for the satisfaction you have expressed regarding the little picture I sent you. If you derive the slightest amount of pleasure from it then I shall feel delighted - I don't know the volume

of John Taylor you refer to - any name would almost do "The devotee" "Tired" "Rest" & c

The costume is Brittany, so that if you find anything in John Taylor's volume better than those I have suggested, you can apply it - Had a letter from Reid - May and he are hard at work in Stonehaven - I hope Mrs Walker is quite well. Having the pleasure of meeting her one might I presume in asking to be remembered to her also to your brother (whose Christian name I forget...) He kindly called on me when in Edinr-

Many thanks for your kindly asking me to visit you when in Aberdeen. I shall most assuredly do so. I should like to have a chat on art with you again. I am not exactly sure if I will be north this year as I will have to work very hard - Allow me again to offer you my thanks & subscribe myself

Yours very faithfully

G P Chalmers

1866

18 November 1866

Alexander Gerrit Mollinger to George Reid

I hope you can read this letter.

Menton. 18 November 1866.

Mon cher Reid.

Peu de temps après la reception de votre aimable lettre, je suis parti pour la Midi de la France.

Me voila, établier sur le nouveau dans ce beau pays, ou l'hiver est inconnu. J'ai près mon logement Hotel de la Grande Bretagnes.

Les Souvenirs à vos sejours chez moi, me serve toujours très agreables.

Je suis très curieuse de savoir de nouvelle de vous, et il faut m'ecrire surtout beaucoup de vos traveau, je pense que vos tableau que vous avez commencer chez moi, sont déjà fini, et que vous avez fait des étused très beau et très juste de ton.-

Si vous vous rapeller tous ces beaux tableaux que nous avons vue à Amsterdam, Haarlem et La Haye alors les qualites superieure, ce sont le juste ton, la grande distinction de couleurs, et le sentiment profond, avec lesquels ils sont fait.-

Moi je n'ai pas fait encore des grandes choses.-

En quittant Utrecht, j'ai passé quelque jours chez mon maitre Mr Roelofs, ou j'ai vue des très belles choses, je lui ai persuader d'envoyer un tableau à Monsieur Withe [White]; je penser que vous serier encharge en admirer ce beau paysage; puis je suis rester quelque temps à Paris chez mon ami Artz, ou vous avez vue des aquarelles chez Monsr. Verloen à Utrecht, après ça je suis parti le plutôt possible à Menton.

Et maintenant je suis commencer à faire des aquarelles d'après la nature; et je peu vous dire que votre boîte à couleurs, que vous m'avez donner, est excellent.

J'ai reçu une charmante lettre de Monsr. MacDonald, qui m'écrivit que mon petit tableau de Meerkirk, lui plaid beaucoup; j'ai alors tous les satisfaction possible., en attendant je vous remercie que vous avez été l'interprète chez Monsr. MacDonald.-

Ici à Menton, il n'y a pas de nouvelle, presque chaque jour le temps est beau, encepté le vent de Mistral autrement le soleil donne beaucoup de chaleur, et vous savez que je suis great amateur of the sunshine.

En maintenant, mon cher Reid

[this piece of paper cut out]

P.S. fait S.V.P. beaucoup de complement à Monsr. Withe [White] et Madame la chère épouse, et dit lui que j'aurai écrire bien tôt une longue lettre.

1867

24 September 1867

Obituary of Gerrit Alexander Mollinger The Scotsman by George Reid

.... Although it is only about three years since he first exhibited in Edinburgh, his works have acquired a large amount of popularity, and generally formed one of the chief attractions in the landscape department of the Exhibition. In the International Exhibition of 1862, his works were amongst the best and most characteristic of those exhibited by the modern Dutch school, and were warmly eulogised by Palgrave in his celebrated handbook. The visitor to the Royal Scottish Academy Exhibition of 1865 cannot but have been struck by his fine landscape, "The Church at Lincelo" its great breadth and truthfulness, combined with excellent colour and masterly execution, rendered it notable. The late John Phillip, R.A. often expressed a desire to possess his work. It was first purchased by Mr Hill; and at the sale of his collection, passed, after a keen competition into the possession of Mr Baird of Cambusdoon. His "Sheep-Cotes at Westerborck," of the following year, was purchased by the Royal Association for The Promotion of Fine Arts; and his largest work in the past Exhibition - "Autumn in Drenthe" - was bought by a well-known connoisseur in art, Sir David Baxter. Two smaller works, "The Village of Meerkirk" and "A Creek behind a Dutch Farm" were also of a high order. His earliest artistic education was received in the *atelier* of Roelofs - one of the most distinguished landscape painters in Belgium - with whom, and the still more celebrated painter, Israels, he was in the closest and most intimate friendship. By those who had the good fortune of knowing him personally his early death will be much felt - for his gentle and loveable disposition endeared him to all with whom he associated. Even in this country, where he was personally known to but few, his friends and admirers might be counted by scores - there being a force and charm about all his works which drew sympathy unconsciously towards their author.

1868

8 July 1868

David Artz to George Reid

Paris 8 Juillet 1868

3 rue de l'Abbaye

My dear Reid

I also have been too long of answer you but it is because I have been removing as you can see on my new address.

The photograph of your picture makes me much pleasure, it is the first time I see somewhat of your work and I like it very much, especially the light effect is very fine and true.

I will be very delighted with a proof of the portrait of your friend and also with his own work, if perhaps you can send me some works, I like very much the English literature [sic] I like much more the English authors [sic] than of the French, it is generally more poetical and the humour is of better quality. I have read John Hallifax the last time, and with very much pleasure, after the Englishmen there is but the German how has an idea of that spirit, the Frenchman is quite different of that.

I am very glad to see that you have so much to do, there is but one happiness for a man, that is work - I am sorry that I can not come and see your English painting but that will be for another time, it is one of my loveliest projects to make a journey in England.

I have not yet received a letter from your friend, but if you see him, you can tell him that I will do my best to make a good and nice little picture for him as soon as I can find time to do it, - for the moment I make an aquarel for Bruges and somewhat little pictures for Goupil and Co.

I am glad to see that you can read my English but I know it yet too little to write as I wish, I have yet too little words and forms to my disposition, but that will go better when I will be here, I desire much to make his acquaintance.

I had a letter from Israël's yesterday in which he told me that a picture from the Paris Exhibition is bought by Mr Macdonald in Aberdeen. You have probably seen it now.

Now my dear Reid I must leave, be so kind to give my best compliments to Mr & Mrs White and believe me

Yours faithfully,

A Artz

17 September 1868

John Forbes White to George Reid

I need not say that your note gave me much pleasure and surprise. Your remarks are too complimentary but I am sure that they are sincere and in some respects they are very true. I am very sure indeed that my love of art is deep and earnest and pure. It has grown on me and I can scarce say when it began. I know that my love of nature and appreciation of landscape were surely

incurred by my pursuit of photography - I came to see new beauties and to find out the finest points of view - But it has served its purpose in my education, for I am now painfully conscious of its defects and weak points. I remember as a small boy being taken to see a picture (travelling through the country) by one of the Carracci (I think) representing Adam & Eve - When I came home I remember trying to draw it - I remember too amusing myself while recovering from an illness by copying a sketch of Braemar. I came on it some years ago and was rather surprised to find that it wasn't bad by any means - I remember too making a pencil sketch of my father which was thought to be very like. But somehow or other while all the rest of the family got lessons in drawing from Francis Craigmyle and other eminent masters I did not come in for a share of the instruction, being thought too young I suppose - College life afterwards absorbed all my thoughts and then business came as the natural consequence of being the only son available for this purpose - If I had not drifted into commerce, I should have studied medicine which was my favourite profession. We had no connection with the artist world or I might, perhaps have found this vocation most congenial, but it never came before me, as a choice when I began to travel abroad I instinctively took to galleries and this love of art has been my pleasure ever since - any little knowledge I have has been acquired from a loving study of every beautiful thing, but you rate it far too high - two things have contributed largely to this development - the sympathy of my wife who with me has felt its power and who seems to have acquired a fine feeling for art by instruction and next by intercourse with you. I well remember my first visit to you in the Gallowgate and since that time I look back with pleasure on the many happy hours we have spent together, talking over all sorts of subjects. You are able to give me much knowledge and insights which I should otherwise have been destitute of and your room and your society has since that time been my most pleasant refuges - I wonder sometimes, what sort of an artist I should have been - nay likely one of those with high aims and ideals which I could never realise - I think I am happier and better now not to have made any attempt to handle as much in pencil - I have no wish to try it now, as it might very likely spoil my idea of what a painting should be. So I shall just go on, cultivating a taste, which is to me a great source of pleasure, I will not say amusement a recreation for it is much more than that. I am sure I am a better merchant by having such an outlet, for I think I can approach business with more freshness than those who have no such noble aspirations.

1869

28 March 1869

George Reid to John Forbes White

I find myself falling behind and gradually drifting into debt...it is a thing I have always had the greatest horror of - Perhaps however it will come all right again bye and bye - but I sometimes feel it like a millstone about my neck - I must come back early and work very hard this summer in order to make up for my almost unjustifiable visit to this place.

14 April 1869

Rev Thomson of Haddington to George Reid

I don't care much for his Yester Avenue - the subject is stiff and symmetrical - too straight-lined & regular for an effective picture - Still McKay has advanced marvellously since your visit here.

9 May 1869

George Reid to John Forbes White

I cannot but feel sorry that Gérôme's star is so much in the ascendant here - he is exercising a strong and very hurtful influence upon many of the young fellows, both in regard to choice of subject and manner of painting. Jules Breton and Daubigny have their worshippers too - but their numbers are few.

28 June 1869

David Artz to George Reid

Paris 28 June 1869

My dear Reid

Je vais continua en francais parceque ça m'est beaucoup plus facile.

Vous soyez que je suis sain et sauf a Paris et j'ai ue un très bon paysage de Folkstone a Boulogne je ne sais pas encore ce que c'est le mal de mer.

J'ai vue avec beaucoup de plaisir votre tableau a Edinburgh, je le trouve très beau, une couleur profonde et clair en même temps et une facture large et simple, enfin c'est un bon tableau!

Continuez mon ami vous ferez de belles chases, vous avez un bon oeil pour la nature, tâchez de le fortifier seulement et vous prosperez.

Votre tableau est très bien placé au milleau de la salle la place d'honneur.

Faites mes compliments a votre frère Archy et à votre entiere famille et aussi a Mons. Alex. Macdonald si vous le voyez, vous pourez lui dire que sa lettre à Aubert a été expédieré, mais il a probablement déjà une réponse d'Aubert même.

Je n'ai pas encore fait grande chases mais j'espère dans peau de temps etre bien entrain. Je n'ai rien vu de Longmuir, je ne sais pas s'il est à Paris ou non.

Pinchart vous salue la main

Votre ami devoué

A Artz.

21 December 1869
David Artz to George Reid

Paris 21 Dec. 1869

My dear Reid

Mieux vieux que jamais like a french proverb says, and to think I am writing you again after I dare not say how long. But you know how time flies in Paris, how many theatres concerts dinners etc. are constantly taking a man's time and leave him only from time to time a quiet evening to do just the most absolute necessary. Also I hope you will excuse me like a good fellow and again let me know how you are getting on.

The first thing I have to say is that I wish you a merry Christmas and happy New Year with your kind family to which I pray to remember me, and second that you will receive (on Christmas I hope) the same slip you sent me with the engraving of your fine portrait for which I am very obliged to you, ralled in some fine etchings which I hope will like you. At the same time you will receive a little parcel containing a printbook for Alice and Aitchy White which I beg you to give them for me with a kiss.

Some weeks ago I received the visit of Mr Stevenson your friend and very kind gentleman (thorough Scotch). I spent some very pleasant evenings with him and his family and I am generally glad with that new acquaintance, they will stay whole the winter over in Paris and je me promets encore beaucoup de plaisir de leur amité.

In your next letter you must tell me what you think of my picture I sent to Mr Macdonald.

I had not yet time to paint something for Mr Walker, when you see him give him my compliments and tell him I will soon begin something for him and send him a jotting of it.

You will be like we are struggling with darkness and of time , it must be worse still in Aberdeen than here and I am already in despair how to finish something.

Do you know something about Dun? is he working and how? he will probably paint for the Academy, I received an invitation from the RSA but I fais not to be able to send somewhat although I should like it very much.

Poor Cotier[?] has lost his eldest son, how sad for him and his wife

I hope you will be as successful this year as you was the last, when you make every year such a step you will be soon in an agreeable position.

Mr White has told you about my new studio I suppose which is indeed a great deal better as the one you saw me in, it is studio to paint fine things in, if one could only do as he wishes cappitel[?] pictures would I paint now, but the ideal remains always far of. How is Archibald getting on ? Does he work hard? Remember me to him please.

I hope you can read my bad writing and language and wait not so long to answer as I did.

Believe me dear Reid as ever

Yours sincerely,

A Artz

(Rue Furstenberg)

1870

11 May 1870

George Reid to John Forbes White

I hope Macdonald will have better thoughts and not go in for a Millais - he will be foolish if he does - He will pay quite a ransom for anything he may get - and the satisfaction of knowing he will never make his own out of it again. Millais has been too worked up by the dealers - and has too extravagant a wife to act the G.F. Watts.

20 June 1870

George Reid to John Forbes White

I had a note from him [Macdonald] this morning - he had been at Little Holland House on Saturday & is greatly pleased with Watts

July 1870

George Reid to John Forbes White

George Mason's Derbyshire Cottages is quite a gem in its way although just a little slovenly in painting. Perhaps his ill health may have something to do with it. An evening effect, a few houses in the middle distance in front grass and some clothes bleaching and two figures, lad and lass and some carts and horses crossing a bridge. He said he must stay in London and work all summer to make up for lost time. He has never been in Scotland but would like to have. I recommended Seaton Cottage. He would like to come but would hardly see his way if anything could be managed it would be 10 days or a fortnight in September. I told him how glad you would be to see him and how good all things at Seaton Cottage.....I have settled upon a design for the portraits putting both together on one canvas - and making a picture of them. His [Mackintosh's] mother-in-law's house "The Eagles" is close beside this - the grounds belonging to it are magnificent. There is a very beautiful pond in the lawn full of waterlilies - just at their best - it struck me whenever I saw it that it as something that would be of use. I have decided upon painting the children sitting beside it - I have been making detail studies of some of the bits during the last two days - do you think this sort of thing will do?

I find myself not a little disappointed with Millais' portrait of the Marchioness of Aboyne - it is not the great work I had anticipated. His picture of the flood - although amazingly popular is hardly worthy of him - it looks made up to a degree - the finest thing that perhaps he has ever done is the children in the young Raleigh picture - they are wonderfully fine, although I quite feel the truth of what Israëls says about the work as a whole.

7 August 1870
George Reid to John Forbes White

Portrait painting occasionally indulged in is to me a great luxury - become habitual a great affliction - I feel that it is eating the life out of me - and sucking away some of the best feelings I have. It must and shall be got rid of at all costs - but it must be done gradually. You know what I have upon my shoulders - well all that must be provided for - and there is no sure ready way of doing so than by portrait painting, for that you have always an audience ready to your hand for the other thing you have to make your audience - a slow and laborious process, one also needing faith and patience - both of which qualities I do not possess so fully as I would like.....then take Watts - I have changed my opinion a good deal about him this year - his portrait of Burne-Jones is the only fine thing he exhibits - the Daphnia and the other classical or allegorical subjects are - well I won't say exactly mistakes - but certainly tending in that direction.

The fountain head of Watts' inspiration is not nature - but old pictures - now this seems to me an abuse - not the use of knowledge that can be had from the old masters - not the sort of art that will live - that can be genuine can be built upon such a foundation.

In either of the two pictures I refer to - do you find a touch of pure healthy nature? I think not - they are simply clever, morbid anxious reproductions of the ideas of older painters - painted in colours that represent the faded state of their colour after the lapse of centuries and under sundry coatings of brown varnish - Watts painting is not healthy - it is a sort of antiquarianism - and the results of this should his pictures be in existence in a couple of centuries hence will be seen - He paints his pictures and gives them the dinginess of an old master work - at once - he should have left that to time - but he has chosen to take Times work into his own hands - well - Time will be up sides with him by and by.

Still like George Mason he is in earnest and "filthy lucre" is not written on the fronts of his pictures. Meanwhile one feels in a hopeless state - the hopes of a better day being near at hand seem to have dissipated.

21 August 1870
George Reid to John Forbes White

I have not made a single study in the outside (for landscape) this summer. This is sad but it cannot be helped. Perhaps in September I may be able to do something - when I have finished some of the most pressing portrait commissions I have, then I give portraiture up - if I ever do a portrait it will be an exceptional case - I feel I am being drawn almost exclusively into it & the more I do the more I get asked to do - this by an effort must & shall come to an end.

25 November 1870

George Reid to John Forbes White

I think I will get Sam sent up before I come north and go through to Glasgow with him for a day so that he may see his future master Leiper and matters can be talked over. I think he will make as good an architect as anything else.

1871

9 January 1871

George Reid to John Forbes White

Once or twice Mr Brodie has spoken to me about getting some of your pictures on loan for the coming exhibition - he spoke of the Israels and the Clays - I did not hold out any hope whatever, knowing your feeling in the subject - but promised him to write to you about it - and also to Macdonald about his Clays.....write soon and let me know how you are - give a look now and then to what Archy is doing - and paint on his pictures when you feel needful.

14 January 1871

George Reid to John Forbes White

I am glad you like Leiper's designs for the furniture - it is a pity the colour is not darker but I think this can be helped - the chairs will not look right till they are covered with the purple velvet or plush - and the different monograms embroidered on the backs with coloured worsted - this will be a nice amusement for Agnes and Lizzie after they come home - they will require to be designed with some care both as to the form and colour..... I am glad you see Archy often and give a look to what he is doing - your observations anent "experience and knowledge" are true and just - let a man know never so much about nature there is no way of arriving at a true mode of giving expression to it on canvas but by these two things - there is no Royal road - even to the most highly gifted - but through much labour and patience.... strange - you do not seem a bit older than when I first knew you - always the same good, genial warm-hearted mortal - I don't think years will ever sour you or make you less loveable - rather the reverse.

21 January 1871

George Reid to John Forbes White

I am glad you like Archy's picture so well - it would be very nice if he sent it as "property of" but do not I pray you do anything that would make you seem to urge Mr Crombie - if he likes it good and weel - but knowing your good nature

I would say do not say too much.....Chalmers begins to be unhappy about the little bit - now that it is yours - it has grown into a "bête noire" and he begins to agonise. I must keep him up to the scratch or he will overdo it and spoil it.I got the little sketch for Dr Keith's portrait this morning - all right - I shall work over it and give it a little more of the look of the picture - you are quite right about the tone of the shadows. Cameron has just called in and he tells me you and Macdonald are to be invited to the Academy dinner this year - "make to yourselves friends of the mammon of - until - I shan't finish - but the policy of the Academy is in a transition stage since Hugh and MacDuggart became councillors.

4 July 1871

David Artz to George Reid

233 Gedempte Gracht

My dear Reid

Many thanks for your kind letter and commission, I am sorry not to be able to send directly some sketches, but I will do so in some weeks I hope. I am painting a girl of Scheveningen (about ten or twelve years of age) life size [sic] a beautiful studie for a large picture I intend to paint in Paris this winter or perhaps sooner. I just finished a small picture an interior with a woman and a child but there I can't dispose of and even isn't this the picture I should like to have in that gentleman's collection.

I will unfortunately be obliged to leave The Hague before you come but will probably be back again there about the end of September or the beginning of October and may possibly find you there still.

Israëls just finished two pictures for Aberdeen, I think Mr White's is a very fine one, perhaps the other too (for Mr Macdonald), but I don't consider it so lucky, it is of course not necessary to tell him so; in the last days he commenced a large landscape with sheep which is beautiful, with a dark stormy sky and very grand.

When you see Cottier give him my love, I wrote him but perhaps he didn't receive my letter yet being abroad.

I am glad to see you are so busy, although you may like more to paint landscapes is portrait painting a very amusing, and interesting study too, and not the less profitable I suppose.

Give my kind regards to your family and to Mr and Mrs White and Mr and Mrs Macdonald and also to ones' Edinburgh friends when you see them. I wrote to Dun at the same time when I wrote you but didn't hear from him yet.

Now my dear Reid I wish you good success and...[bottom of paper has been cut off].

30 September 1871

George Reid to John Forbes White

How malignant is this same Mr Taylor who steals Cottier's ideas and designs whenever he can and then speaks of him as "only a glass stainer". Israels says he would have taken no notice of it - he has suffered in his time from malevolent critics but he takes it all kindly and philosophically "When it is so" he remarks - "then I am like a snail and creep into my shell till all is past" By the way this brought out a story from Israels of a criticism he once had in his earlier days from an Amsterdam journal upon some large pictures he had exhibited "What is this we see! does Mister Israels call this painting? For our own part we find better the great pictures exhibited outside the shows in the Kermig - Mr Israels should have exposed his paintings there they are not deserving of having being placed in an exhibition and again the "Independence Belge" speaking of a somewhat blotchy drawing by him says this man is a *Betgener* "What you call a cheat" to expose a drawing with a little work on the figure and the rest "rubbed in with dirt" and then to ask for four hundred guilders for it" - Indeed as far as popular criticism has been able to harm and do mischief to him - it has been done and even yet in Holland he is not appreciated as he should be - all sorts of duffers of the Sen Viate and Blaes order are preferred to him. He says he has got far more recognition abroad than at home, the Legion of Honneur from France & the Arms of Leopold from Belgium - from Holland nothing-

And yet he is not without his audience and has still a circle who believe in him and sympathise with him and he is happy and contented - He is on the whole one of the cheeriest - most amiable, philosophical of mortals - and can take the loudest praise and the heaviest censure with the same good lazy grace. He knows too much of the world and too much of the ignorance and stupidity and smallness of many of the people who live in it to allow "the even tenor of his way" to be upset or disturbed.

27 December 1871

George Reid to John Forbes White

A great reformation has taken place chez Chalmers since ten days past - I go for him every morning at 9.30 and we have a long walk together - He is immensely the better of it already & finds he must go to bed in better time - he is coming up to the scratch like a man - and has never once been late, always breakfasted and waiting when I call - He is working over much better and more happily as a consequence - He and Cameron are both splendid fellows - we see each other every day - sometimes oftener than once - I have seen Cassie two or three times - He was here last night for some hours. I have also seen Herdman, McTaggart, Brodie - Hutcheon, Sir Noël & Waller Paton and some of the other fellows. I have got the picture of his [Auldjo Jameson's] children just in now and am now going over it again - with lots of thick solid stuff..

I am glad to hear Archy's pictures are getting on well - see him often and give him the benefit of your council.

31 December 1871

George Reid to John Forbes White

When I came up here I found that Chalmers was still leading the old sort of life - I call'd and found him in bed at 11am "with a head on" as he says and his model? In the room waiting for him - I spoke to him seriously (how many times have I done so before!) and exhorted him to amend his way - the good soul is always full of repentance and good resolutions - lacking only the strength of will to convey them out... Cameron and Chalmers are both much pleased with Jamesone's portrait and with "Broadsea" - I am going to work on the Coast and background of the former - and on Broadsea also - there is a great division of opinion about the figure of the woman in the foreground - Chalmers and Cameron say "paint it out altogether" and merely put in a basket or something of that kind in her place - holding - that she is spoiling the whole picture - Cassie & McTaggart on the other hand won't hear of her being put away - declaring that without her the whole picture will be spoiled. Now what am I to do? Is it to be settled by vote?

1872

5 January 1872

George Reid to John Forbes White

...this same Daniel, - once so loveable - so full of warm enthusiasm - so full of high aspiration - so earnest in the search after those things which are clear and beautiful and of god report in the world of art - that same Daniel of the many aliases - has become renegade and retrobate - and forsaking the old faith - has gone and bowed down - and now doth worship- daily - nay even hourly in the temple of Mammon!

15 October 1872

George Reid to John Forbes White

Now my dear White let me thank you as well as mere words may for your kindness in letting me have the use of all this money, and for so long - Indeed I do not know what I should have done if I had not had you to apply to when in straits - and they have been of no insequent occurrence during the past few years since the whole case of providing for the daily wants of the household fall upon me - things however, I think, are coming right now - and the struggle is about over - at least so it seems to me, Archy and Robert are afloat now and only Sam remains to be set agoing - and I hope a couple of years or little more may see that accomplished.

I can tell you that five years ago - when my father ceased to be the provider and there was no one to look to but me - I felt it was an almost desperate case - I thought there was nothing else for it but long years of hard drudgery and pot-boiling - work of any kind, if it only brought in a little money.

Well things have not been quite so bad.

I have done work of that kind at times for the mere sake of money that I should much rather not have done - But still, after all - no great harm or loss of time has come of it. Now I shall be in great measure free from the necessity of doing things of the kind - I shall be able to choose my own work - and enjoy it.

That I shall be a "happy" or a "jolly fellow" I don't mean - something either constitutional or mental makes life to me, as Dr Brown's collie dog "you o seriousness" I sometimes wish I could be less so - but life is serious let people say what they like to the contrary - and painting is serious too, at least anything like levity I have as yet never found in very great work.

But I am talking about irrelevant matters - and to return to the matter - and to return to the point I would once more thank you for your kindness about the money - you took away half the pain of I can tell you that five years ago, when my father ceased to be the provider and there was no asking it by the kind and generous warm-hearted way in which you gave it - that, I cannot repay - nor can I forget it while I remain, Yours ever truly,
George Reid.

1873

20 April 1873

John Forbes White to George Reid

We had a long visit on Friday from the Marquis of Huntly, brought by Barclay. He had seen the "Museum" and wanted to come and call - He is a very affable man - simple and natural and very frank. He does not know much about pictures but he is learning in a good School, as his tutor and friend in Art is G.F. Watts, with whom he seems on very intimate terms and who has been painting his portrait. He goes and sits frequently with Watts - Watts and Leighton are his great painters. There is evidently a coldness as to Millais. He speaks of getting Watts to send something to our Aberdeen Exhibition. China and old Silver are what he knows more about.....

Did I tell you that the Mechanics Art Exhibition was a deplorable affair? I doubt if it paid - By day there were very few visitors.....Jamesone was saying yesterday that he owed me a debt of gratitude in keeping back his portrait from such a gathering. Our exhibition is certain to go on - there is some talk of getting Kennedy to be our paid assistant - which might do - at least I know nothing better..... his functions would be subordinate to Dalrymple and me to save us bother and take charge of pictures etc.

22 June 1873

David Artz to John Forbes White

I could not find a quiet moment to thank you for the kindness you had in sending me the article you wrote on Mason's pictures, I Reid[sic] it with great interest and saw once more how true and conscientious a judge you are in art

matters, if there were a little more men like you thirsty after real art it would be a great relief for many artists who would try to be appreciated by you instead of going in to please the general sale of amateurs by being more artificial than artistic, that is true....

I saw also the two young Scotch painters you gave a little note for me....

23 August 1873

George Reid to John Forbes White

Chalmers is evidently disappointed about the hanging of his End of the Harvest he says "it is ruined and could not possibly have been well hung" He finds fault with the hanging generally 1st there being no line proper but an attempt to divide it by placing the halves of the under and upper pictures or it is in the line being formed of the upper and of the frames of the lower pictures or the under side of the frames of the upper - he declares this to be a fundamental mistake whereby the whole Ex suffers citing the two paintings by Harvey as example - there he finds fault with the three Vandijks being up where they cannot be seen and declares they ought to have been down on the line - next - about the Titian being in the small room & over a fire place - should have been on the line in Great room next the old man's head by Rembrandt, for being buried in a corner then the Reynolds he is very strong against the hanging as a rule. However I mention this as a bit of criticism and you need not give it more weight than you see fit.

About The Whins - If they ever come to anything - you shall have the first offer - I promise this - but, only, remember if the thing is very fine - if not it must go elsewhere - Macdonald never said a word about my wish on his part to have an offer so you may keep your mind quite easy on that score - But as the picture may not turn out well may, in short, end in nothing, the less we say about the matter the better.

I think you should sell the Peter Graham - I don't think his prices will go on increasing very much more now - you might have a fine Israel for the money.

14 October 1873

George Reid to John Forbes White

I hear there will be a deficiency of about £200 in the Exhibition funds here - so if you have been one of the Guarantee people you will have to stump up 2/- in the £- and with your trouble besides - "the public" - don't seem to have appreciated the collections as they ought to have done.

I am glad you have had such a pleasant time of it among the Dutch men - you will have lots of news to give me on your return. I agree with you in all you say about Frans Hals - Rembrandt and Van der Meer of Delft - great fellows each and all of them in their way - notwithstanding John Ruskin.

I was out at Kepplestone last night, and find Macdonald has begun at last to take action in the matter of rebuilding part of his house - but he is sorely exercised in spirit over Mr Russel Mackenzie's plans - I protested against some of the things - there is to be no picture gallery - and his bedrooms and "the well" were to form the new dining room - with two windows looking to the cold north and a cross light falling in his principal wall for pictures - and they lighted mostly from the north.

I have protested mightily against this arrangement and suggest the present drawing room being enlarged and turned into the dining room - while the drawing room is to be made to correspond to the dining room - with the east window built up and a big window to the south to light the whole room - while the drawing room is to be made to correspond at the other side of the passage with its light from the sunny south - it is sunshine and warmth and light that the house needs - and if he does not get it now - the place will remain cold and dismal & dark to the end of time - or at least to the end of his time - You must be at him when you return.

1874

27 January 1874

John Forbes White to George Reid

Go on my boy enjoy your strength, giving as you are doing in completeness all round - I can forecast the future of many people and artists but if you have strength I don't see the limit of your career. Every year will now tell on your ripening art and you are every day becoming so much more the master of yourself you may have worries! but you are stronger than they and must overcome them. I feel enormous pride in you.

It is not often the purchaser is the man that fixes the price of the goods, but somehow I feel that I know all about "The Whins" or "The Gold of June" and that I have a better notion of some things about it than even you. The price cannot measure its excellence - it is only a tribute to its goodness. I enclose a cheque for £210 which I hope you will not look on as full payment but take in the meantime with my best wishes. I am indeed happy to be the owner and hope some day to be able to hang it in a fine light in a worthy place..

19 October 1874

George Reid to Mr Walker, Dean of Guild of the West Parish Church of St Nicholas

The public cannot be accepted as a competent judge of such matters, and I sincerely hope that the members of the West Church will exercise the utmost caution in what they do. There are many reasons for this - the chief of which is that the architecture of The Church, as it presently stands, is *absolutely perfect*, and beautiful of its kind. Its architect, Gibbs, was a man of refined and scholarly taste, who had studied much abroad; and down to the minutest

details, he shows a perfect knowledge of the style of architecture chosen for the building. The proportions of the church are, in every respect, perfect - the interior especially so. There is a grace, and dignity, and simplicity about it that is quite charming. I know of nothing more beautiful of the kind north of the Tweed,

21 October 1874

George Reid to John Forbes White

So far as the appearance of the interior is concerned, the greatest possible improvement is to be effected by the introduction of *colour* in the roof and windows.

The roof of nave and side aisles present a splendid opportunity for full-toned harmonies of colour, with a sufficient amount of ornament to enrich it. This would give everything required to complete the architectural beauties of the interior. The ceilings under the galleries would also require colour and decoration, though in a different style.

The side windows of the Church might be filled with delicate quarry glass, sufficient colour being introduced to give richness without obscuring light. The large window behind the west gallery might be treated in a more pronounced way.....Should these improvements be carried out, I need hardly say how necessary it will be to have them done in a thoroughly artistic fashion. Colour must be absolutely right and perfect, or it is worthless. There is no middle course between good and bad, and this being the case, the most competent decorator that can be found must be entrusted with the work. He must be one who can understand, appreciate and sympathise with the architecture of the building. Decorators of this class are by no means common, but still, I doubt not, some one may be got to carry out the work in a satisfactory way.

I have told Mr Walker that should the proposal to decorate be favourably received at once to propose Cottier as the only man fit to do the work well.

1877

7 May 1877

Colonel W.H. Lumsden to George Reid

My dear Reid

The Royal Academy opened today and I went in this afternoon and saw your pictures. It was a great pleasure to see the old friends there albeit one has not something of a new face! I liked the old face so much that I cannot make up my mind if the new one is merely a change or an improvement but it is perfectly delightful anyway. The bents and the sea and the lovely grey sky above are a joy for ever. It is not injured in the humblest degree by the journey as far as I could see but I never could get close enough to look closely into it the crowd was so great. It holds its own against anything in the room with it. It is above

the line as you know. Broadsea is on the line in the next room. I have marked the exact locations with an x. in the enclosed plan. The Whins ought to have been on the line too but it is not badly hung and on the whole I congratulate you on your first appearance in London. But why Oh why did you make such a conciliation on the name ofof...Englishness as to call it Gorse? You should have stuck to Whins - nay I should have called it Aberdonian Fens!

Millais' landscape is wonderfully fine but not very interesting.

4 November 1877

George Reid to John Forbes White

I had a note from G P Chalmers some days since - he has been rather unwell and seemed frightened about himself and is full of good resolutions for the future.

1878

10 June 1878

George Reid to J. Irvine Smith

It is the first picture I have finished in my new studio. Alas! That it should have been one with so many sorrowful associations - I looked to having him here at the housewarming - he said he would come - but I had no heart after what happened to have anything of the kind.

15 June 1878

George Reid to J. Irvine Smith

I could not keep my hands off the old portrait (painted in 1872) and when I once began working on it was impossible to stop till I had entirely repainted it. It seems to me that although rude and sketchy in some parts it is liker than the small portrait - especially in the modelling of the upper part of the head. I have written to JFW to come out tomorrow and look at it and if he agrees with me in this opinion I shall then send on the big picture to you and if Gibson, Dr Luke, Hutcheson and you agree, it can be sent on to Rajon along with the small one. He may be able to get some hints from it that may help in getting a good likeness but I still wish him to work mainly from the small one (it is better placed on the canvas).

1 October 1878
 Samuel Smiles to George Reid

My dear George

What a tremendously fine caw-mac-caw - their description that is of the superlatively sublime nature of the Aberdeen geniuses! It is a sort of Don and Dee Hallelujah. "That Corot!" "That Turner!" Superb, that cottage by the Don! I suppose it is one of Mr White's toadies that has written the Hallelujah, and wants an invitation "back again"!

Gill has been laughing constantly at the letter, and says "What an awful fate the writer of the letter has predicted to Sam and Archie? What is it? "A fact", says the writer, "which reminds us of the parallel case of the two Aberdeen sculptor brother [the Brodies], one of whom came to so sad an end. I am sure that, however much the various Aberdeen geniuses may be pleased with the toadies letter, you must be very much disgusted with it.

1879

27 January 1879
 George Reid to J. Irvine Smith

About the tail piece ie the palette and the hands - if you and Gibson don't like it - don't use it - It can be omitted.

13 June 1879
 George Reid to J. Irvine Smith

I hope to finish the picture for the Association in a few days more - I have had a great amount of worry with it - having changed the subject after working for some 3 weeks upon it (you will see the original picture in one of those photos of the studio) Now it is changed to the indicated on the preceding page. The sky is very light - full of mottled white clouds with the blue peeping through here and there. What is known as cirro-cumulus - I have never tried it before but after many experiments it seemed the only kind of sky that would suit.

2 October 1879
 George Reid to John Forbes White

Hook was over yesterday afternoon. I showed him Savonarola - He says I should make it life size. I think he is right - so I shall recommence it some of these days on the larger scale. He likes the subject.

1880

July 1880

George Reid to J. Irvine Smith

I have just been over at Macdonald's He is mending very slowly. His strength is not yet returning - but this ... is partly from his not being able to eat - the stomach being disordered in consequence of want of exercise and fresh air - and the sleeping drafts, much mixed with opium, which he still has to take at night in order to secure sleep. The skin of the leg is broken and a considerable watery discharge has taken place, but there are signs of healing - the swelling is greatly down.

...Poor M is very low in spirits and very weak - but I hope he will soon be himself again.

21 October 1880

Samuel Smiles to George Reid

I am sorry to hear of Macdonald's illness. I fear there must be something badly wrong with him.

25 October 1880

George Reid to John Forbes White

I had two sittings from Millais and painted a little sketch of his head in profile for Macdonald who is greatly proud of it. You must see it soon.

1881

27 February 1881

George Reid to J. Irvine Smith

I am sorry for the way in which Archy has been treated - Pat Adam's case is worse by far - it is shameful that a lot of differing artists who happen to have things in their power should treat such a fine enthusiastic young fellow in such a way - Try to cheer him up - he has the stuff in him and if he likes he will make his mark yet.

27 February 1881

George Reid to John Forbes White

Unless you had explained it, I never should have pressed the cause of offence, nor how you had succeeded in... yourself into the state of mind is painfully evident in both your recent letters - that it arises from misconceptions I think there will be little difficulty in showing

13 March 1881

George Reid to J. Irvine Smith

I hope the Millais exhibition will still be open when you come up - it is exceedingly interesting - and almost everything in it is fine - one or two - quite splendid in some respects. I am greatly delighted with some of his very early pictures.

He came along on Sunday with and saw B[artle]-F[rere]'s portrait - He liked it. I am still anxious about it - and there is not much time left now (little more than a week).

18 March 1881

George Reid to John Forbes White

The Millais exhibition is very fine and very interesting, his early pictures in part-heads especially - resembling Van Dyck or Memling - Sharp and microscopic in finish - with wonderful character in the heads and hands

The presence of fine colour is evident from almost the beginning. I lunched with him one day lately. He is doing a "Cimbella". I suppose it will go to the R.A.. I also saw a portrait of Dizzy - just rubbed in. He - M - came along on Sunday and saw Sir B-F's portrait. He liked it.

18 March 1881

George Reid to J. Irvine Smith

I said I hoped to sell the set unbroken - but if this may not be - then I hardly suppose he will grudge letting you (for once) to have the first chance - He has often had the like himself - Why should not another?

21 December 1881

Samuel Smiles to George Reid

I suppose you have given up your idea of taking a studio in London. Well I have no doubt, you will do well enough at home. Still, it is possible you may remove to Edinburgh. You must be in the metropolis of the North if not the South. You might then pick and choose the best of sitters.

1882

3 April 1882**George Reid to J. Irvine Smith**

I think I shall take a permanent studio in Edinburgh and come up for a few months every winter. If you chance to hear of any likely place kindly keep me in mind.

I saw Macdonald yesterday. I was surprised to find Mrs Macdonald also...there was Millais, McLean and his sweetheart....McD is going down to see Hook on Saturday. He is up to the ears in engagements. He says he has already begun to be "chaffed" by the Aberdeen newspapers, about being for the fourth time at the Banquet of the Royal Academy

I saw your portrait of yourself, which is capital. That of Hook is also very good, that of Pettie, done by himself, I don't like. He has built, you know, a Pettie Palace, at St John's Wood, and Maclean has been his architect. Every artist in London tries to surpass another in building. Pettie's, after Millais, seems to be one of the best.

30 May 1882**George Reid to John Forbes White**

I am fearfully worried about my work which is always getting further and further into arrears. I have taken rooms in Edinburgh and will likely have to be there most of the winter and spring. All the autumn I shall be away with sitters in the South. It is a great bother this wandering kind of life but I cannot but help it at present.

15 August 1882**George Reid to Mia Reid**

that long dismal list of "engagements" with sitters haunts me yet I cannot make up my mind to write and tell them that after waiting - some of them for a year or more - I cannot fulfil my promise.

17 August 1882**George Reid to Mia Reid**

.....a capital room, with two large windows in Queen Street - looking into the gardens. I shall only occupy it for a few months during winter - but Archy can give up his little poking place and have my rooms when I am not there.

22 August 1882

George Reid to Mia Reid

I fancy St Lukes may ultimately become only a summer residence where we may spend four or five months of the year.

17 November 1882

William Stott of Oldham to John Forbes White

(This letter is in the possession of White's descendants)

Ravenglass
Sunday
Nov 17 1882

Dear White

I should have written long ago since – but that I had hoped & hoped to have better news to tell – We are here still – “midst the birds that bring fog and snow”. I have long since given up grumbling about the weather – I simply bear it.

I think where one has tried hard that disappointment comes with redoubtded bitterness. This unfinished state of one's work & its lack of realisation bothers me more and more.

I forgot whether it is the weather or one's own inability to do anything better & fearful doubts will come sometimes about my capability & these doubts of all things are the most cruel pangs.

If I can't be a painter I won't be anything and this idea which will come sometimes of perhaps not having the power within to become an artist is agonising.

Dear White your troubles sink mine into insignificance. I feel how utterly selfish I have been to think only of myself being cursed with ill health – I do sympathise with you from my heart & so does Mary. How we should like to help you. However I have found that in the midst of crowding difficulties – difficulties which if I hesitate for a moment are reflected on the chance of overcoming – would crush me utterly. I have found the only thing is to throw oneself head long – body and soul at them – knowing nothing but that while you have breath you will conquer – like changing a battery – not caring how many hidden guns there are – only knowing that you must overcome them or death or defeat comes – let it but that is not our business to think of daring the charge – You have dear friend a beautiful home – one of the happiest & most loveable families..... I spent happy hours among and above all & I think you & I ought thank God for it – a love of beauty for that which is beautiful & good & above earthly affairs – a power of enjoyment – which neither good or evil fortune can rob us of. – which makes us richer by far than ought can.

As we stand at present I think we shall be here until the middle of January. We cannot even pass Xmas at home – We must eat our Xmas cheer amongst the Laidhills, birds & snow

Lately I have worked outside in this bitter weather – but I thank goodness the fight is almost over – whether for good or bad & we shall be off to sweet study & repose.

The picture is now in Paris – “Sisters” & tho’ but ordinary I fear much better than I had at one time hoped to get out of this season. I have nearly done what I can to the “Kissing Ring” outside – I cannot bear the cold much longer – I have worked often until my fingers were so numb that no feeling was left in them. On a hill with mist & a cold wind piercing you is not a situation desirable.

I am getting on also with my interior of the Carpenter’s Shop & have finished both figures – there remains in it now about two weeks work. Then I must finish the twilight inside here while the impression is still fresh.

I have received some annoyance from the minister here – a sort of protégé of the Lord Muncaster who bothers me about the children not being at school & talks as if two afternoons absence would ruin the child’s future & says art must not be considered & curtly asked me to drop work for a week till the holidays commenced.

How is that for high? After all this fright & vexation.

Give our kindest love to Mrs White “the gentle one” & other children.

& for yourself what shall I say? We always look upon you as very dear friends & what can a friend wish for another?

We wish you a happy issue out of all your troubles – no man I believe deserves better fortune than you & I am sure that your troubles will be lighted by sunshine &ere long. I feel powerless & yet my whole heart goes out to you- I daren’t mention my “baby” trouble besides yours but we must both keep our heads up the stream knowing and believing nothing but that we can & must win.

Mary and I long to see your hospitable home again – I should like to have good long talks with you on many things. But we can’t. We must be off – I am fearfully behind in study.

Well try to pass a happy Xmas – if a poor landscape painter’s wishes for happiness will help – you have them & Mary’s too – We shall think of you now till we hear better news.

Your affectionate friend

Will Stott

You need not fear our mentioning it - Will.

25 November 1882

George Reid to J. Irvine Smith

Mrs Macdonald has been ill in bed for some days (a bad cold) I saw M. last night - He has got another portrait (the 27th now) this time it is Poynter R.A. He will soon have the whole Academy - He wished me to do Fettes Douglas & Sir John Steel.

1883

Undated but dating from February 1883

William Stott of Oldham to John Forbes White

(this letter is in the possession of White's descendants)

Understand that the thought of sending to England has never entered my head. Life is too short to send pictures where people care for them little & even if they did – when they will not hang on just principles. I couldn't bear to send "our Alice" to be seen by a lot of people who are simply incapable of discerning its intention not to say – judge it. My others of course I don't send on the same grounds.

We feel very happy to get back here in our hunting grounds & to settle down to a year's delightful study & to busy ourselves in a life" where no evil thing can find a home".

I can't tell you how deliciously refreshingly to me the idea of months of untrammelled study is Give our very kind regards to Mrs White & to Alice & the children. Write me a line when you find a spare moment.

Yours ever

Will Stott

Undated but dating from April 1883

William Stott of Oldham to John Forbes White

(this letter is in the possession of White's descendants)

4 Passage Dulac
Rue de Vaugirard
Paris

Dear White

It is a very long time since I wrote you – you know why. Since I wrote until four days ago it has been one turmoil of pictures & Salon – and of getting one's self settled here – I am writing this in my studio opposite to Alice's portrait.

Do you know that tho' there are some things I see now that I did not like when I left – I like it better! Whether I have done wrong or not I don't know. This year there is to be a triennial Salon – where only 1000 works will be received. It is to be held under Government auspices. I wished to send it there. It took me a long time to decide and so much trouble of spirit that I was glad when the day to send arrived & right or wrong the pictures were off. For all of my work this year two only do I care for much – "A Kissing Ring on the Sands at Twilight" and "Alice". I am not ashamed as the painter of "Alice" to say that in looking at it I receive intense pleasure – I don't think anyone else can be so

cognisant of my shortcomings as myself & I see in this portrait no end of them – but its impression and intention are bigger than I thought I had achieved. The one (we may only send two works) I sent along with the Kissing Ring – to the Salon – is the Carpenter's Shop – of much less artistic beauty than 'Alice' but more finished.

'The Kissing Ring' is in exactly the same intention & spirit as "Alice" – the other is one when perhaps there is more which appeals to the "pork butcher" – Sargent likes Alice the most of anything he has seen of mine – Hella & L'hermitte – the latter especially – were very pleased – L'hermitte especially admired it in movement & standing & the delicate effect of 'indoors'. But most of them decided (except Sargent) that for my own sake I had better send the two works which differed in character – I mean one aiming at absolute beauty – the other where everything was rendered down to the cracks in the Carpenter's bench because they explain me better to the world.

I have taken a liberty with "Alice's" frame & gilt the interior – I think it is better & hope you will like it. The other exhibition will only delay its return to Scotland six weeks & I wished to send it to the Triennial rather than either of the two I sent to this one – I shall try to send my "Deux Soeurs" with it – a large grey picture I painted this summer – a fearfully cheeky one. Some day if I ever find myself in Scotland and "Alice" – I think perhaps two hours would do all that I should like – it is a nice thought – a trick in certain parts of the modelling – I am glad all this which is over eight months of continuous worry of spirit try one sorely. But we did beat after all, we beat the heathen, I finished every work I started but I should not like to recommence the battle for some time.

Mary is as good & dear & kind as ever & thank God both of us are in very good health.

I always look back to the painting of Alice with intense pleasure because it was a sweet lull before a tremendous fight commenced. I remember the days on which I painted each part & you can at least console yourself by knowing that it is proving a very delightful companion to us.

I long for a time to come when we shall all be together again for some time.

You must come to the Salon & come to see us – bringing the gentle one with you.

Our good old Millie Dow is here & we have spent some very pleasant times together – We hope to see a good deal of each other – now for a long time. The poor fellow has had a frightful attack of rheumatism in the shoulders & has confined to his room for some time – but he is now better & will be out tomorrow. Mann is here also & going on very well. Jos Farquharson & Mrs F are here. We were up to see them the other evening – they were very kind & nice & we spent a jolly evening. I have no invitation to the Grosvenor & so you will.....

L'hermitte has painted a large "Harvest Scene" for the Salon I didn't see it but believe it is very fine..

Cazin is to have a beautiful picture there. Sargent has sent a large portrait of four children – very good – but not all that he can do. He is painting a

fashionable beauty which he was To finish in time for the Salon but which he will send to the "Triennial".
He has appreciated his sitter very well – a beautiful animal without soul.....

26 April 1883

George Reid to J. Irvine Smith

The Brera has not much - but that huge Giovanni Bellini - "*The Preaching of St Isaac at Alexandria*" and Veronese's *Christ in the House of Simon the Pharisee* delighted me as also a sketch by Velasquez of the head of a dead monk - The famous Raphael does not move me greatly.

8 May 1883

George Reid to J. Irvine Smith.

The Pesaro family by Titian - (from the Freri) has been taken there, cleaned, and set up in a good light in the middle of one of the rooms, a wonderful bit of work - the heads of some of the old Pesari - kneeling to the right and left - portraits - quite splendid - one of the finest Titians I have ever seen.....
Since seeing something of these lakes and the Alps I begin to understand Turner better and the change that took place in his style after he had begun to visit them - you know his early period when Claude and the old masters influenced him - not being hide-bound to tradition he doubtless could not help feeling how very little the old landscapists knew or saw of nature - its light - its infinity - and above all its delicacy - to paint one of these great mountains - with the endless richness of its form and delicacy of colours seems about the most hopelessly trying thing an artist could set himself to do, it seems as if weeks would not suffice - and to get anything like a true ocule of tonality especially if the sun is in the picture is out of the question - Paint can't do it
I have a greater respect than ever for Turner. he was a poet quite as much as a painter - one can see now what he was driving at - and how Ruskin, knowing the country should have become his prophet - and interpreter.

Undated but dating from the beginning of August 1883

William Stott of Oldham to John Forbes White

(this letter is in the possession of White's descendants)

4 Passage Dulac
Rue de Vaugirard

Dear White

Here the photo....at last. I hope you will like them – there are seven instead of six but I suppose that is no matter – it is because the first I had done specially

so that I might examine it & finding it good ordered the six. It is a great shame of me to despoil you of two pictures so long – but now that all my pictures are off to exhibitions I am worse off than you for I have only one or two little sketches staring at me from the walls I don't know whether we had any talk about the Salon – it was not very good.

There was a very beautiful Israels there a sleeping child. Whistler's portrait of his mother which I thought the finest portrait except one by Puvis de Chavannes – a good Bastien-Lepage – a pretty good Sargent "et voila tout" very good L'hermitte a Cazin. Cazin's picture of Judith was very fine. I myself had no cause to grumble – I was well placed & all the artists especially Cazin – Puvis de Chavannes & Sargent thought my "Kissing Ring" a bigger effort – ie a more artistic work than I had yet attempted – of course in the newspapers there was a good deal of loud mouthed twaddle on both sides – some going for me and others praising – but all equally "bêtement". Sargent liked the portrait. L'hermitte also said it was excellent & especially in its freedom of handling. I myself like some parts of it – so much that I wish I had made a very serious work of it – but as it stands I think we have better leave it. We should begin by getting something out of harmony & nobody knows where we should stop.

I have had the old varnish removed and it is so much better. I am here getting as much study as I can but sorely beset by exhibitions & letters and what not. How many thousand little insignificant things are ever coming between us & our big aims. You have no idea what a struggle it is for me to keep myself free for work & how very little work I am able to accomplish. I shall stay all summer right on till next spring & make one big last effort to learn something. I am getting desperate. I want to try such hard things & I know nothing. I hope to be always learning but I can't see my way after this year of giving myself up exclusively to study of the figure.

I have just sold the only small picture I did at Ravenglass – a little girl knitting on the opposite side of a port – reflected up the foreground just getting up – frightened by her approach – effect silvery sunlight. It is bought by an American & going there. It is sad to have all one's work go so far away. I have now two in Chile & one in America – two or three in France.

How are you all doing up at Seaton Cottage with the ivy coming in at the window – the murmur of the mill – poppies – green sward & Lawn Tennis. How I should like to get away from this warm, hazy, musty atmosphere – to see you all & Morris – with his blue eyes & "m-o-r-e k-r-eam p'e-ase"

Never mind himself will be totting up some day & paint the whole infantry – blue eyes & all the more capable of doing it than we are now.

The Triennial will open early in September & if I mistake not be a very powerful exhibition. Everybody is out of town and Mary & I are quite alone of evenings we read Hans Anderson's fairy tales & cry over them in turns I don't know how many times I have read them how beautiful they are!

We are very happy – but it is close in Paris in Summer.

This self imposed grind at study is very good – but it needs a little grit now and then to keep one's eyes straight to the future & not to let them be turned aside by dreams of Seaton Cottage & Lawn Tennis, fresh air & kind friends – I must do it & will & then we'll have a good holiday & begin art in earnest & see whether we are artists or of the common horde or picture makers.

You have not said if you have yet rec^d the stud[ies].

I have paid for the photos for the negative		
For each epreuve 5 fies of	35.00	30.00
	65.00	
emballage	2.00	
	67.00	

& I hope you will be pleased with them. Mary rec^d Mrs White's letter for which she thanks her.

With very kind regards from both of us to Mrs White & yourself – Alice & Aitchie – aussi l'infantie

Yours Will

Have painted a small head of Tom Dow for Cox of Dundee which I think you would like – I think you would like the arrangement. WS

15 October 1883

George Reid to J. Irvine Smith

.....which his N.P. extraction and Radicalism naturally led me to expect. J.F.W. is one of his promoters. Consequently my old friend of 20 years standing is now a disestablisher. Gibson's friend Bryce, who wishes to be M.P. here has declared for disestablishment -. This will make a difference in our friendship in the time to come. I have told him so - I am sorry that "dear Doctor Hutton" should have done this for us two

1884

5 January 1884

George Reid to J. Irvine Smith

Macdonald does not seem to make much progress. I wish there were permanent signs of improvement in his case.

6 April 1884

George Reid to John Forbes White.

I met Millais in the street one afternoon and went next morning to see his pictures. I like his "Little Miss Muffet" best of all. I think it one of the prettiest child portraits he has ever done. It does not go to the R.A. however. I don't much care for the Fisher Girl - or the one in the snow.

C Keene was here at dinner on Friday evening - with Gill and Mr Kershaw. Our accommodation is very limited but we managed somehow and the evening was very pleasant to all. Keene is really a charming fellow.

11 August 1884

George Reid to J. Irvine Smith

Please don't say anything to Mr Mylure about the big roses - as I sold them this morning to Mr Fleetwood Wilson, the old gentleman whose portrait by Millais was in last R.A.. The fellow lily is the only free one now. I must do one other rose piece this summer for Col Lumsden as he has waited a long time.

14 August 1884

George Reid to J. Irvine Smith

I must stop flower pieces now for the summer - as it is high time I had taken up some of the portrait work which has been lying over for the past 2 months. What a narrow escape McTaggart and his family had!

1885

23 March 1885

George Reid to John Forbes White

I have written Murray Garden and told him that I cannot undertake to paint portraits from photographs. I wished Mrs G to sit when I was in Aberdeen during the summer - but she would not. Her son did all he could to persuade her so it is no fault of his. I told him that if he liked to engage Archy to do the work instead I would hand over the beginning I made of the picture and the small cabinet photograph taken about the same time - and after he had done all he could I would spend a day in overhauling it and making it as close to my recollection of the old lady as possible.

Glad to hear that you have got the Aberdeen Artists Exhibition put off till July, August and September - they are better months for catching people.

6 July 1885

George Reid to Mia Reid

It was very beautiful all the way north today - a bright silvery sky - full of light, and tender colour...and further north in Kincardineshire - the hill sides ablaze with golden broom.....St Lukes is looking quite beautiful just now. The front of the house especially. The gloire roses outside my bed room window have climbed up almost to the top of the house.....It seems strange having no Macdonald sending over the old familiar meringue "Mr Macdonald's compliments and he will be very glad if you will look over this evening". I have got my brushes and colours out and the sitter's chair placed on the throne and every day ready to begin work tomorrow morning. I shall most likely go in the afternoon to the opening of the Exhibition. Archy says it is a very good one

indeed. It has done him a lot of good and he "buike" -up wonderfully. He is quite a man of affairs and full of interest in the success of the show - He has gone into town to dine at the Cadenheads. He is much pleased with the commission to paint Banff.

Archy has just come out from town. He looked in at the Exhibition in the forenoon and there were eleven people in it and again in the afternoon when he found one solitary visitor!

It is to be hoped that the people of Aberdeen will turn out better bye and bye, if not he says the whole Artists Society will have to "bolt" as they will not be able to meet their liabilities. Archy is much pleased with the commission to paint the view of Banff and is going there soon to make the necessary sketches.....Mr Guthrie, the artist who painted the goose picture Mr Edmond has is coming out to dine tomorrow evening.....Bella and the cook are going into town tonight to see the Exhibition. I gave Bella the money to pay for both

9 July 1885

George Reid to Mia Reid

Archy, Jas Cadenhead and young Guthrie (the painter of the Goose picture) were with me at the time. They are away over to see Macdonald's pictures and will be back in a little to dinner.

1886

9 February 1886

George Reid to John Forbes White

Archy's trifling contribution I have put on the line & I have done the best for Sam and the rest of the Aberdeen men generally. but Jas Cadenhead ought to know better. His sheep picture is not up to the mark! Garden Smith has just missed making a good thing in his largest picture. His small one I like greatly. Gowans is dismal, Hunter do. McKenzie simply turns my stomach (2 of Garden Smiths are out - I would do nothing to save them...).

1887

13 July 1887

George Reid to Mia Reid

rhododendrons] in a wicker basket with no water, so withered quickly.

15 July 1887

George Reid to Mia Reid

I got some fresh rhododendrons this morning and replaced the withered ones of yesterday with them. I may perhaps be able to make something of them after all

7 August 1887

George Reid to J. Irvine Smith

I was in town the other day and saw J.F. White who is looking remarkably well. It is such a long way over to Seaton Cottage from here that one finds it rather a difficult business to keep up communications.

1888

27 February 1888

George Reid to John Forbes White

I have no doubt the advice of Dowell gives is sound. He knows the Edinburgh market well and is reputed to be a thoroughly honest man! So you may safely trust to what he says. There are so many picture sales coming on during the next few weeks that it might be difficult to get such good prices as otherwise, so if you can wait then by all means do.....

..It is sad to hear that the old mill is silent! I can feel for you from my heart. But you must not allow these thoughts to overcome you too much. Seaton cottage has many beautiful memories associated with it - do not let sad ones mar them now. I hope the house will find a good purchaser at a good price but you will not readily sell it so as to cover all you have laid out again it since you became its owner.

9 March 1888

George Reid to John Forbes White

Dowell told Irvine Smith the other day that in looking over his books he found that since 1882 pictures had gone down just 35 per cent in value! Rather a serious fall. I hope when November comes that things will be better.

7 October 1888

George Reid to John Forbes White

Lavery is a very clever fellow. I have known his work for years and admired it. I shall hope to see the sketches you mention when I go to see the Glasgow Ex.

9 November 1888

George Reid to John Forbes White

You will still have a very nice little collection left - in fact the cream of what you have - many of those you are parting with ought not to give you much regret

13 November 1888

George Reid to John Forbes White

I think Guthrie has a good chance tomorrow - if I went to the meeting I should vote for him - but I don't know whether I shall go or not. I don't care for academy meetings and avoid them as much as possible - Archy of course has no chance - I did not know til the list came in that he had again put his name down - he never said a word about it to me - if he had I should have dissuaded him.

He was nearer the thing ten years ago than he is now - I am sorry for him, poor chap - but he has taken art too easily of late years - perhaps owing to his physical condition effort was impossible - but I can't help thinking he might have striven a little harder. But don't say any of this to him - it would do no good.

17 December 1888

George Reid to John Forbes White

I was distressed when I heard of the result of your London sale, but from what you tell it might have been worse and I am relieved to think that many of the "lots" still remain your property. We shall talk the matter over when we meet - but I think the Goupil proposal is perhaps the wisest and safest possible under the circumstances. At any rate you run no risk compared with what you would at C. M. and cos.

1889

11 January 1889

George Reid to John Forbes White

I have put you down for Thursday the 17th. I hope you will come as early in the day as possible as the light often gets bad toward afternoon. Have you seen the report of this affair between Whistler and William Stott of Oldham? In case you have not I send herewith the little evening paper.

19 May 1889

George Reid to John Forbes White

...I am "wae" to think that Aberdeen has lost you. The old place will no longer seem the same without your kindly and genial presence. What a long history seems included in the last five and twenty years since first we knew each other, from the days when Alice as a little thing in a white frock was brought down land and nearly all the old ties and associations with Aberdeen broken and the whole aspect of things changed!

17 December 1889

Josef Israels to George Reid

...I have waited to answer you for the reason that I looked round how to answer you rightly on your demand for a Rembrandt good gracious a Rembrandt! but now it is astonishing that a young nobleman in Holland has sold his property and however, no body did know and he neither that inside his family portraits in his old chateau where [sic] portraits of Rembrandt the antiquaries brought it out and everything is sold except his two portraits of Rembrandt! A friend of the painter Neuhaus saw them when he was painting studies of them in the country and found them right Rembrandts and fine. Now I know that a friend of mine one Scheltema in Amsterdam has them for sale. it is a real trustworthy man you can rely on, his firm is the very renowned antique in Europe of Trederck Muller Amsterdam. I told him your case and he shall write you very soon. You can deal with him. it is a perfect gentleman and a real connoisseur so I hope you will buy one and have a Rembrandt more in your country but I believe that they ask a high price for it...

1890

26 January 1890

George Reid to John Forbes White

I cannot manage to have your portrait exhibited here this year - seven pictures is the limit and my list is likely to be filled to the uttermost - as Dr Gloag - the moderator - is anxious that his portrait should go this year - "the next year" - as he remarks - "he will be nobody".

29 November 1890

George Reid to John Forbes White

I hope next time we go north to stop for a night on the way and see the yellow doors with the drawings on both sides. I don't know how it is that we have never yet seen your Dundee home.

1891

22 February 1891

Samuel Smiles to George Reid

I am sorry for Mrs Thomson. She must feel very sad now. The pictures (as much prized by the bishop) went for particularly low prices. My brother sent me the catalogue. I wish [I] had had a chance of your "Whins in Bloom".

27 November 1891

Talk of George Reid to the Royal Scottish Academy Life Class

The defects to which I have called attention in your life school work appear to me to be a want of thorough training, especially in drawing from the Antique. It is too much a habit among students to look upon that front of their education as little better than a dreary preliminary to be got over and done with as soon as possible. This insensibility to the wonderful beauty of the Antique especially to the work of the old Greek Sculptors. The young students finds himself in a Gallery full of casts from the Antique. He probably knows little or nothing of the history of Greece, of Greek mythology, or of Greek Art. He only sees a number of more or less mutilated figures, some mere torsos... It is hardly to be expected that the enthusiasm of the student will be awakened if he is left to work on in a dull, mechanical way. but once he gets his eyes opened to the beauty and to the meaning of what he is attempting to draw and the entire aspect of things will be changed. Instead of drudgery work from the Antique becomes a source of interest and enjoyment....

Greece is essentially a country of mountains hills and valleys. It is a small country. Wheat barley and other cereals with flax and wine and oil and various kinds of fruit are the chief products.

The climate was mild, nowhere was it very severe - The Greek was neither overpowered by excessive heat nor stiffened and numbed by excessive cold. He escaped the two extremes which tend to dreary inertia on the one hand and to cultural privation or toil on the other. "Our air is sweet and kindly" says Euripides for as the cold of winter has no vigour. "The sun's rays harm us not" says Euripides. The Greeks held that their climate was a gift of the Gods, a people living in such a country and in so genial a climate develops more quickly and harmoniously than others less favourably situated. They lived much in the open air and they lived in the simplest way. A piece of bread and a handful of olives would suffice for their wants. Even at the present day the food that a common labourer in Scotland consumes would suffice in Greece for a family of six, or more.

....Sophocles - at the age of fifteen - the most beautiful youth in Athens - danced naked - according to the rite, the pean in honour of Apollo after the Victory of Salamis in the midst ofgroups before the trophy. But it was chiefly in the worship of the Gods that the orchestra was called into service - according the Greeks, the most pleasing spectacle that could be offered to the Gods was that presented by beautiful and healthy bodies trained, developed, strengthened, graceful and perfect in every member. ..

1892

15 December 1892

George Reid's Inaugural speech as President of the Royal Scottish Academy

The new Charter has now become law and under it many important, and also I believe beneficial changes, will take place - chiefest of all the giving to Associates a voice in the management of the affairs of the Academy. I for one am heartily glad of this and sincerely trust that good will come of it.....

The nursing mother of Scottish Art and Artists. The subject of the better training of art students must be taken up and every possible effort made to improve the present state of matters - which is - and for long has been, most unsatisfactory. Our relations with the Board of Manufacturers ought if possible to be improved. Why should they continue to be strained - unfriendly? they should do their utmost to make the annual exhibitions thoroughly representative of all that is best in the current art of the day - not only of the Scottish - but of other schools as well.....

While there are many members who have set an example of devotedness to the Academy in this respect, there are others, unfortunately, who have done very much the reverse and among them I regret to say a number of young associates I hope by and by when we have the pleasure of seeing the Associates present at the meetings of the Academy, a better and more loyal spirit will prevail among them

At the present time there is not a single member of the architectural profession associated with the Academy. This, gentlemen, is a condition of things which should be remedied at the earliest possible opportunity. It is little short of a scandal that a Royal Academy of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture should be without a single representative of one of the branches of the Fine Arts included in its designation..... We should ask the architects as a body to submit to us the names of the men who stand highest.

I hold that in the present state of the Academy's finances we are not entitled to spend £120 to £140 annually in dining some fifty guests who - for the most part have never done anything to benefit the Academy in the smallest degree - and many of whom - if report speaks correctly, are contented with the glance at the exhibition they have during dinner and never enter the rooms again till invited, perhaps, to accept the academy's hospitality....

...this would bring the outside artists into friendly contact with the members of the Academy and would greatly help to promote pleasanter and more friendly feelings between different members of the Profession....

I believe much might be done by individual effort to lessen the evil referred to, and to revive interest in Scottish Art, especially in the work of the younger men - There is no lack of talent among them - many of them., I feel sure, are destined to achieve fame in the future.

1893

9 May 1893

John Forbes White to James Pittendrigh Macgillivray.

James Pittendrigh Macgillivray MSS (National Library of Scotland Dep 349/67)

My dear sir

I don't think that I have ever met you but I saw and admired your work - I am sorry that I could not arrange to get a commission for you for the statue in Aberdeen - I argued your special claims.

But there is a small thing I can put your way - I am connected to a Canadian company which is building a fine house in Aberdeen (a Head Office). The kingstone of the entrance should have a head "Britannia" or something similar.....could you now make a sketch of what your mind suggests and send it to Mr Smith.

27 September 1893

Mia Reid to James Irvine Smith.

The very disorderly note I sent you was dictated by G.R. whilst smoking and thinking. - and must have been scarcely intelligible - He has been sorely troubled over this matter - feeling how it would affect the Academy as well as himself - now he has quite made up his mind to resign - we have had days and nights of uncertainty, very wearing out and bad for him in every way - again and again he has said he would be more than relieved - happy and at rest if he was free from the Academy - so today he has written his letters and they are to be posted tomorrow. I think they are clear and to the point, yet as little disagreeable and they could be while giving reasons for his resignation.

1 November 1893

George Reid to John Forbes White.

My dear J.F.W.

Deputation 4.35. Sir N.P., Cameron, Wingate and secretary. Reported - my letter had been read at meeting - very friendly expressions of genial regard expressed for matter etc etc but meeting would not discuss proposals. Ultimate decision re-appoint same deputation to confer. Deputation only authorised to say if I will withdraw resignation Academy some time or other will discuss the various points and see if anything can be done - Can't possibly make any definite promise about anything just come back and trust them to do what they think right.

Much talk - pathetic appeals not to ruin the Academy - etc etc.

Will the Academy give nothing but the vague promise to consider?

Can't possibly - can't think of things till resignation is withdrawn. And so the matter stood after nearly two hours of talk.

1897

1 August 1897

George Reid to James Pittendrigh Macgillivray**James Pittendrigh Macgillivray MSS (National Library of Scotland Dep 349/56).**

Things have long been in a deadly state of stagnation in Scotland as far as sculpture is concerned, and I think if there is to be a revival in the near future you are the man to bring it about.

1901

24 April 1901

Josef Israels to John Forbes White.

My dear Mr White,

Your letter as always was very welcome to me. You are as all old strong machineries who however out of joint still always ready for being restored - Shall you try our coast in Scheveningen this Year. My villa will be habitable in a fortnight and when the weather will remain as it is now we shall have a fine Spring. I have to go to Cologne for the yearly festival of music. I hope that I feel good enough to go and that any companions also are all right. Isaac is not enough lover of music to go with me.

I have send [sic] you a copy of an article my friend Mr Lieberman about me. I hope you can read it or one of yours will translate it for you. It is a fine german artist Mr Lieberman and I believe you will enjoie [sic] his views of art - About your friend Mr Barclay I have great pleasure to see him here if he comes to town. and we could arrange together a picture at his convenience, he speaking and telling me his ideas and I drawing and sketching before him what he wants, afterwards I can make such a picture at my ease and send him over. I am busy with all sorts of large and small things the difficulty is to have it all right.

Believe me truly your

Josef Israels

1902

23 January 1902

John Forbes White to James Pittendrigh Macgillivray**James Pittendrigh Macgillivray MSS (National Library of Scotland Dep 349/67).**

Rachel mends slowly....It is weary here for her active soul.

1918

3 February 1918

James Cadenhead to James Pittendrigh Macgillivray

James Pittendrigh Macgillivray MSS (National Library of Scotland Dep 349/67).

I had an intriguing sidelight lately on Sir James Murray, from Robert Allan's wife. He is a neighbour of the Allans in London, and had been trying to impress Mrs Allan. She had gathered from him that Aberdeen when he took it in hand was in a wretchedly retrograde state, and that there was not there, and never had been anyone there, who knew anything about art, and that he is just beginning to rectify the situation and spread the light. He told her that he had had to go on his knees to persuade [Augustus] John to do Lloyd George for him, and had been obliged to buy another very expensive picture from him to put him in a good humour.

1933

13 April 1933

"Death of Sir James Murray" Aberdeen Press and Journal

With his characteristic resolution and impetuosity, Sir James Murray set himself to alter these conditions. Taking the advice, among others, of Sir George Reid, he decided that, in view of the Granite industry, and the necessity for the provision of fine examples for those whose trade it was to carve and fashion the local material, a Sculpture Gallery was an essential feature of the institution he had in mind. This was rendered possible by the handsome gift from the Clark Trustees, and the building was largely extended and improved.

Aided by Sir George Reid, and afterwards by Mr Robert Martin, of the Victoria and Albert Museum, Murray brought together a large and representative series of casts of the world's masterpieces of sculpture - Egyptian, Greek, Italian, German, French and British

Undated

George Reid to John Forbes White

The "Veri Vindex" allusion was in jest. We have both of us become more tolerant since then - and the learning influences from other sources have done much to make the Scottish painting of today very different from what it was thirty years ago.

Appendix B

I. **Transcription of a List of Paintings, watercolours, engravings and etchings acquired by John Forbes White and itemised by him in a handwritten record.**

The sale details of some of these works were added later, in another hand. Further exhibition and provenance details not listed in White's notebook have been added in italics. The record was written c.1904 (see no. 68), the year of White's death and is not complete – it seems to end c.1874. Other works, which were known to have belonged to White but were not itemised in his own notebook are listed in Section II.

Oil Pictures

Arranged in the order of purchase

1. **Interior of the Church of St Jacques, Antwerp** by Minguet.

This picture was got by me at an art union, the ticket costing 7/6f at Rotterdam in 1850 – (pictures by Minguet exhibited in the French Gallery (Lambeth) London were priced in catalogue £30.). 20 x 25½ in. *Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.*

2. **The Pedlar** by Kraebeels. Bought from a dealer at Antwerp in 1851 – price £6.- 23 x 18 in. *Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888 (as by F Crabeels).*

3. **Winter** by A. Backhuysen of The Hague - £15.

This and following picture were sent over on approval by Mr Baillie of Antwerp in 1854. 14 x 11 in. *Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.*

4. **Summer** by A. Backhuysen of The Hague - £15. 14 x 11 in. *Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.*

5. **At the Cove** by James Cassie. 1861. £30. 24½ x 15½ in. *Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1st December 1888 as "At the Cove, Kincardineshire Coast".*

6. **The Court of the Doge's Palace, Venice** by J.B. Van Moer of Brussels – exhibited in the Belgian department of the International Exhibition in London in 1862, no 1860 of catalogue. Price asked £160. I offered £100 – which was at last accepted. Van Moer requesting that the price should not be mentioned, being much below the price at which he had sold other pictures in England. This picture was given me as a present by my wife. Sold at Dowells 18/2/05 £35.14/-. 46 x 47 in. *Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (101) and Glasgow International 1901(1457) as "The Giant's Staircase, Ducal Palace, Venice". Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.*

7. **On the Marshes (near Brussels)** by F. Fournois of Brussels (no 1792 of the Int[ernational] Exh[ibition] 1862 cat. £32.

8. **Heath Drenthe (North Holland)** by A. Mollinger of Utrecht. Exhibited in Int[ernational] Exh[ibition], London 1862 no 1286 catalogue. £45 (A present from me to my wife). *Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (10), Exhibited Glasgow International 1901(1333).*

9. **Landscape with Cattle, Arnheim on the Rhine** by J.H.L. de Haas – Holland
Exhibited in International, London 1862 no 1247 Catalogue £15/5-. $12\frac{1}{2} \times 14\frac{1}{2}$ in. *Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (33), Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888 as "Cattle near Arnheim on the Rhine".*

10. **Near Village of Meerkirk (south Holland)** by A. Mollinger of Utrecht £50 – got as a companion to *Drenthe* from Mollinger whom I met in London by arrangement. *Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (13), Sold at Dowells 18/2/05 £120. 15/- Exhibited Glasgow International 1901(1354).*

11. **In Norfolk** by Henry Bright bought in 1864 (along with no 12) from a Mr Gilbert who brought down from London a large collection of ordinary pictures with a few good ones. Sold by auction. £10. $17 \times 9\frac{1}{2}$ in. *Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888 as "The Marshes, Cromer, Norfolk".*

12. **Landscape** by Gerard Bilders (Dutch) bought at auction referred to in no 11 for £15. Sold at Dowells 18/2/05 £13.13/-. $14\frac{1}{2} \times 10\frac{1}{2}$ in. *Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (69), Possibly included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888 (as "A Farm Yard").*

13. **After Rain in the Highlands (of Perthshire)** by Peter Graham £25. Commissioned in 1864 and got in 1865. Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (21).

14. **Portrait of my Mother** by George Reid, Aberdeen. Painted in 1865 £15.

15. **In the Valley of the Esk** by George Reid - £8. Sold at Dowells 18/2/05 £10.10/-.

16. **Sketch of "Jip"** by James Cassie £5. Painted in 1864 (I think).

17. **Canal near Schiedam** by W. Roelofs, Brussels The master & friend of Mollinger £42
– a present to me from my wife on my birthday 11 Jan[uary] 1867. Sold at Dowells 18/2/05 £94.10- *Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (84).*

18. **The Connoisseur** by Tom Gray, London – nephew of J. Cassie £10.10/- Feb[ruar]y 1867
Finished sketch of a picture sent to Edinburgh. $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11\frac{1}{2}$ in. *Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.*

19. **Solitude. A Mountain Tarn near Sligachan, Isle of Skye.** Sketch in oil painted on the spot and finished in Edinburgh by John MacWhirter, Edinburgh price £15 obtained from

MacWhirter March 1867. $15\frac{1}{2} \times 11\frac{1}{2}$ in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.

20. **The Poor Family** by A. Mollinger, representing the flitting of "la pauvre famille" from one village to another in early morning. Price £20 – forwarded when Mollinger was in Mentone, by his father. The agent had addressed it "Mr Wyt, Aberdeen". It lay for months at Aberdeen, as the consignee could not be found! It would shortly have been sold at Castle Street by sheriffs "warrant to pay freight". Sold 18/2/05 £5.14- Exhibited *Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873* (42).
21. **The Pleasure of Hope** (mother watching child in cradle) by G. P. Chalmers, Edinburgh. Exhibited in Edinburgh in 1867 price £26.5-. Painted to my order. Chalmers was made ARSA the following year. Exhibited *RSA 1867*. $9\frac{1}{2} \times 12\frac{1}{2}$ in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888 as "The Pleasures of Hope".
22. **Twilight in the Sound of Jura** by John MacWhirter, Edinburgh, painted for me from a sketch taken by MacWhirter while yachting on the west coast with John Phillip RA, price £50 exhibited in Edinburgh in 1867. MacWhirter made ARSA the following year. Exhibited *Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873* (67).
23. **Woman with Child on Knee** by A. Artz, Paris. Artz is a young Dutch artist, pupil of J. Israels and friend of Mollinger. I saw the picture begun in Spring of 1867, when I visited the Paris Exhibition with George Reid. Price £15 (was to be £12 but sent £15), met Mollinger in Paris for the last time before his death at this visit to Paris, (a present from my wife). Exhibited *Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873* (187) as "Mother and Child". *Aberdeen Art Gallery*.
24. **On the Scheldt** by P.J. Clays, Brussels. This beautiful example of Clays was commissioned by me shortly after my visit to him in the autumn of 1867, on my way home from Holland price £50/- Exhibited *Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873* (132) as "Calm on the Scheldt", *Aberdeen Art Gallery*.
25. **Castle** by P. Stortenbecken of The Hague – bought from the artist when we visited The Hague in the autumn of 1867. Price £28. Bought with a view of it being a picture for Macdonald (who had asked me to look out for a picture for him) but Macdonald did not care to have it. I had always admired Stortenbecken's cattle pieces and meadows in The International Exhibitions, in the Salon at Paris in '67 and in London.
26. **The Departure** by Josef Israels – we made the acquaintance of Israels during our visit to Amsterdam in the autumn of 1867. Israels was a great friend of Mollinger and knew me well by name. He had been painting a small interior for me (arranged by (Mollinger) but on looking over his sketches we found a small one of "The Departure" which pleased us very much and Israels undertook to paint it for us price £100, received in the beginning of 1868. $43\frac{1}{2} \times 25$ in. Exhibited *Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873* (26), Exhibited *RSA 1876*. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.

27. **Stirling** by George Reid exhibited in Edinburgh in 1867 price £10 small original sketch also in possession. Sold Dowells 18.2.05 £28.7-.
28. **[title not stated]** by Henry Moore, London bought by me in The Royal Academy, London, in 1868 price £21 very much praised in the "Spectator" –Sold Dowells 18/2/05 £44 2/- *Possibly exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (157) as "After Sunset"*.
29. **Interior of the Bakenesse Kerk at Haarlem** by J. Bosboom of The Hague. Ever since the International Exhibition in London of '62, I had been anxious to have an example of this fine painter on whom we called when in The Hague in 1867. I wrote to him in 1869 (Feb[ruary]y) but he was too busy to undertake my order. But by the great kindness of Mollinger's friend and executor M Verlosen van Themaat of Utrecht, to whom also I had written on the subject, it was managed by Mr Bosboom and Mr Verlosen with Mr Van Rappard, a well know collector in Utrecht, that I should have the choice of the finest works by Bosboom out of Mr Van Rappard's collection which is particularly rich in Bosbooms – accordingly two pictures were sent over for my selection, of which I retained the Bakenesse Kerk. It was arranged that I was to have this picture at the price Mr Van Rappard had paid years before, when Bosbooms prices were lower price £34 (400 guilders) This very gratifying incident was one of many kindnesses received by the us in consequence of our connection with Mollinger. Sold 18/2/05 £56.14-. *Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (32), Exhibited Glasgow International Exhibition 1888. National Gallery, London.(plate 7)*
30. **Portrait (sketch) of Josef Israels.** This portrait was painted during Israels visit to us at Seaton Cottage with Madame Israels in 1869. It was carried so far by George Reid, then worked on by Israels and received some friendly touches from Hugh Cameron RSA and G.P. Chalmers RSA who all signed their names, with presentation to me, on the sleeve – It was the work of about 6 or 7 hours in all. Sold 18/2/05 £283.10/- *Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (209) and exhibited Glasgow International 1901(259).(plate 18)*
31. **Portrait of my Mother** by Josef Israels – painted in Amsterdam from memory – assisted by a photograph (taken in a position indicated by Israels). It was sent as a present to us from the Israels.
32. **Reflected Light** by G.P. Chalmers RSA exhibited at the RSA in 1870 price £20. Sold for £68.5/- 9 x 12 in. *Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (156). Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888. Exhibited at Glasgow International 1901 (cat. no. 338a) when lent by Sir William Arrol.*
33. **Near Seaton Cottage** by Archibald Reid. Exhibited in RSA in 1870 price £7- Sold for £12.12/-.
34. **Near Haddington** by W.D. McKay price £8. 12½ x 5½ in. *Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888 as "A Farm near Haddington".*

35. **The Anxious Family** by Josef Israels now of The Hague. Painted for me in 1870, sketch chosen by me price £150 Sold 18/2/05 £903.00. Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (11).
36. **Portrait of Alice** by George Reid painted in 1869 at age of 6. Sold 18/2/05 £10.10/-. Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (68).
37. **Side of Mill lade at Seaton Cottage** (sketch in oil) – present from George Reid. Sold 18/2/05 £23.2/-.
38. **On a Dutch Canal** Sketch in oil by G.A. Mollinger, selected by me in Utrecht in 1867 only with watercolours for a small sum (10/-).
39. **After a Thunder shower – on a canal** sketch in oil by A. Mollinger selected along with the former (both sold 18/2/05 fetched £11.11/-).
40. **Teaching Dolly to Walk** by Amoux, pupil of E Frère – bought at the French and Flemish Gallery in 1868 – price £12. 6 x 8 in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
41. **Spring- Ploughing** by W.D. McKay, Edinburgh exhibited in RSA 1872 price £50. 41 x 21 in. Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (47) and included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1st December 1888.
42. **On the Sands** by A.D. Reid. Exhibited in RA London 1872 placed on the line and much praised, price £35. Sold 18/2/05 £60.18/-. Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (136), Aberdeen Art Gallery. (plate 30)
43. **Portrait of Hermann** by Hugh Cameron RSA price £35 Sold 18/2/05 £16.16/-. Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (10).
44. **Girl Carrying a Child** by Hugh Cameron RSA a present from Hugh Cameron. Sold 18/2/05 £48.6/-.
45. **Broadsea near Fraserburgh** by George Reid ARSA exhibited in RSA 1872 price £75. RA 1874 and engraved in Samuel Smiles "Life of a Scottish Naturalist" 1877 39 x 23 in. Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (107) and included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1st December 1888.
46. **The Eagle's Nest near Port Sonachan, Loch Awe** by Sir George Harvey PRSA, exhibited RSA 1872, price £210 but Sir George gave it to me for £157.10/- 44½ x 30½ in. Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (298) and included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
47. **A River in Holland** by A. Bouvier of Brussels bought from Goupil & Co, Paris in 1872 – on way home from Italy price £38. (later exchanged for painting by Diaz). Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (89) as "On the Meuse".

48. **On the Sea Coast, Brittany** by Orgell (Spaniard) bought with no 47 from Goupil price £9 (later exchanged for painting by Diaz).
49. **Small River Landscape** by F.C.B. Corot ex[hibited] at International Ex[hibition] London bought from Durand Ruel (Ch. Duchamps, London) price £40. *Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (179) as "La Rivière."*
50. **Threave Castle, Kirkcudbrightshire** – the seat of the Black Douglas by Sir George Harvey Exhibited in RSA Exhibition 1873 price £250. $47\frac{1}{2} \times 30$ in. *Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (15) and included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.*
51. **A Dream of Italy** by Fantin La Tour from Durand Ruel (Ch. Duchamps, London) price £7.7/- 6×8 in. *Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888 as "A Painter's Dream of Italy".*
52. **Small Interior of Church** by J. Bosboom, present from Bosboom during stay in Holland 1873. Sold 18/2/05 £46. 14/-.
53. **The Sketch of his "Tête de Jeanne"** by Josef Israels (original picture belongs to Mr Fenton, Rochdale) a present from Israels during our stay in Holland 1873.
54. **Little Ina** a sketch by George Reid ARSA. Sold 18/2/05 £3.13.6.
55. **Going to the Well** by Hugh Cameron RSA Exhibited at the RSA 1873 and in RA 1874. 33×24 in. *Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.*
56. **The End of the Harvest** by G.P. Chalmers RSA, painted in Aberdeen. Exhibited in RSA 1873 price £120. $62\frac{1}{2} \times 34\frac{1}{2}$ in. *Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (225), International Paris 1878, Glasgow 1880 (Chalmers and Bough Exhibition) and Manchester Jubilee Exhibition 1887. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888 and exhibited at Glasgow International 1901, by which time owned by James H Aitken Esq. (202). Skibo Castle.*
57. **Whins in Bloom** by George Reid ARSA painted on the Island, Seaton Cottage price £210. $66\frac{1}{2} \times 36\frac{1}{2}$ in. *Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888. Private collection.*
58. **Flowers and Fruit** by Madame Cazin bought from Durand Ruel (CH. Duchamps, London) price £6.6-. $17 \times 9\frac{1}{2}$ in. Sold 18/2/05 £15.15/-. *Possibly included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888 as "Fruit".*
59. **Fruit** by Courbet (the Communist) bought from Mr. Cottier for £24. Sold 18/2/05 £57.15/-. *Exhibited Glasgow International 1901(1341).*

60. **Hermann** (in black velvet - small upright picture) by George Reid RSA a present to my wife from G[eorge] R[eid].
61. **Trooper Galloping** by Arus (French) bought from Cottier £17.
62. **Man on Horseback leading horses – wet day in Holland** by A. Mauve Cottier £120.
63. **View near Schiedam** J. Maris Cottier £160.
64. **Flowerpiece** by Diaz exchanged with Cottier for;

47 Bouvier -	£40
48 Orgell -	10
61 Arus -	17
62 Mauve -	120
63 J Maris -	160
	= 347
Sold March 1892 £700	

65. **A Pastoral – Souvenir d'Italie** by F.C.B. Corot the great Corot exhibited in the Salon Paris, 1873 bought from Cottier for £950 about 8 months before Corot's death. Sold March 1892 £6500. *Aberdeen Art Gallery. (plate 35)*
66. **Woman playing Shuttlecock** by Albert Moore - £15. Cottier Sold 18.2.05 £28.7/-.
67. **Chrysanthemums** by John Lorimer Exhibited RSA 1875/6 £6.6/-. $6\frac{1}{2} \times 9\frac{1}{2}$ in. *Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1st December 1888.*
68. **The Woodcutter (Le Boucheron)** by F.C.B. Corot on 31 Jan[uar]y 1875 from Mr. Cottier for £250 – medium upright size. Sold at Goupil for £650 about 12 years ago (23 April 92). Purchased for Mr Freshfield, Solicitor, London.
69. **The Farmer's Daughter** by W.Q. Orchardson RA bought from Duchamps for £500 – Sold to Mr Reid of Auchterarder for £800 (£1500 for it and the Diaz above) – Perhaps too cheap – but thought it better to take than £8000 for the great Corot, Diaz and this Orchardson. *Glasgow Museum & Art Gallery.*

Watercolours [and Drawings]

70. **A Cottage after a Shower** by David Cox £15.15/- bought at Fosters Salerooms. London May 1865, being one of the choicest small specimens of Cox (with opinion of Mr McKay, Colnaghi's Scott too as well as of myself) no 171 of the catalogue of the

watercolour drawings of Thomas Greenwood esq. Sandfield Lodge There were about 50 drawings by D. Cox at this sale of Greenwood's very choice. 9 x 6 in. *Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (357) and included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.*

71. **Monsiuer le Curé** by C.F. Lewis, London £10.10/- bought in the general exhibition of watercolours in the Dudley Gallery (Egyptian Hall). 1865. 4½ x 6 in. *Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.*
72. **Sunset on the Clyde near Bothwell** by Sam Bough £4.15/- bought at the sale of Bough's watercolours in Chapmans, Edinburgh 17 March 1866 no 42 of catalogue. 9½ x 6 in. *Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.*
73. **Scene on the Clyde** by Sam Bough £4.15/- bought at same sale as no 70 no 107 of catalogue.
74. **Brambles** by Miss Helen Coleman, London obtained direct (and with much difficulty) £7.7/-. Sold 18/2/05 £4.0.0. *Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (363).*
75. **Dead Chaffinch with White Roses** by Miss Helen Coleman, London obtained at same time as above £10.10/-. 7½ x 6in. *Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (386) and included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.*
76. **The Church of Zweelo (Holland)** by A. Mollinger (similar subject to the oil painting exhibited in 1865 by Mollinger in Edinburgh which was bought by Alex. Hill for £75 and Sold by auction Feb. 1867 to Mr Baird of Stitchhill for £136.10/-), a present to me from my friend Mollinger. Sold 18/2/05 £52.10/-. *Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (330).*
77. **Stagowan Glen, Loch Lomond** by Waller Paton a present from Mr Paton to my wife in 1857.
78. **On the Caledonian Canal, Loch Ness near Nelson's Monument** by Waller Paton, a present from Mr Paton to my wife in 1857. (8 x 5in.) *Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.*
79. **Sketch on the Don near Kettocks Mill sluice** by George Harvey PRSA done in 1864 in a couple of hours.
80. **Italian Peasant** bought in the Academy of St Luke, Rome April 1866, 12/-.
81. **Italian Peasant** bought at the same place and time as no 80, price also 12/-.
82. **Holly Leaves Against Blue Sky** by Miss Agnes McWhirter £2.2/- got from Mr McWhirter March 1867. *Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888 (7 ½ x 6 ½ in.).*

83. **Pas de Calais** by D. Cox signed 1829 a very choice d Cox – got from Colnaghi & co. who had just bought it at the Bernal Sale price £35 without doubt one of the finest I know by D. Cox bought about 1867. *Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (344) as "On the Sands, Calais"*.
84. **Folding Sheep – Evening in Holland** by A. Mollinger. Sold 18/2/05 £47.5/- *Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (367) and Glasgow International 1901 (1170)*.
85. **Folding Sheep – Morning in Holland** by A. Mollinger [this work and no 84] selected by me in Utrecht in 1867 – after M's death price £5 each. Sold 18/2/05 £45.3/- *Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (385) and exhibited Glasgow International 1901(1193)*.
86. **Spring (April?) Man Putting Cow out of wintershed to pasture** by A. Mollinger. Sold 18/2/05 £13.13/-. *Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (355) as "Putting out the Cattle"*.
87. **Summer (June?) Woman selling vegetables at Market** by A. Mollinger Sold 18/2/05 £50 8/- *Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (353) as "Marketwoman". Exhibited Glasgow International 1901(1202)*.

These two drawings were painted by Mollinger to illustrate the Months and suit the verses of von Vondel a Dutch poet. The other drawings of the set were Sold by me to various people, when they were sent over by care of Mr Verboven van Themat, after Mollinger's death – the two tiles at side of the grate in the Billiard room at 269 Union Street representing "Man Cutting Corn" (August) and "A Widow walking among snow"(December) were painted by D Cottier from this set – each watercolour cost £5.

88. **Woman of Lucca** by A. Mollinger selected by me at Utrecht in 1867 price (I think) £3.
89. **Sketch – Men with Mule near Mentone** by A. Mollinger 15/-.
90. **On a Canal near Utrecht** by George Reid ARSA bought at a ticket Bazaar for £2. Sold 18/2/05 £6.6/-
91. **Interior – Child Left in Charge of Baby, Mother Coming Home From Market (The Return From Market or The Young Nurse)** by Josef Israels painted for me in 1867 price £25. Sold 18/2/05 £231.0.0. *Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (354) as "Waiting Mother's Return" and Glasgow International 1901 (1164) as "The Little Mother"*.
92. **Alkmaar** - £20 by J. Bosboom. Sold 18/2/05 £84/- *Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (374) and exhibited Glasgow International 1901 (1168) on both occasions as "Canal, Alkmaar"*.
93. **Ghent** by J. Bosboom, bought (with 25 & 26 for £15). Sold 18/2/05 £31.10/-.
94. [no title given] by J. Bosboom. Sold 18/2/05 £39.18/-.

95. [no title given] by J. Bosboom. Sold 18/2/05 £46.4/-.

These four charming drawings were selected for me from the sketchbook of Bosboom by George Reid and Israels in 1871. They were part of his own private gatherings which he would not sell but was keeping for his wife. They were got for me as a great favour. *One of these probably exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (376) as "Small Sketch, Holland".*

96. **Sketch of "Motherwell"** by Josef Israels original picture belongs to J.S. Forbes, a present from Israels during our stay in Holland 1874.

97. **A Sketch in a garden** Hubert Herkomer, bought from Rob. Reid £7, a prize at Hogarth Club. 9 x 6 in. *Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (391) as a "Sketch" and included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888 as "In my Garden".*

98. **Distant View of Ashton Hall** by D. Cox bought at the sale of Cox watercolours (sold by his son) London 1873 price £96. There were two slight tears in the side of the drawing – it was repainted by D. Cox jnr. (£5). 32½ x 19½ in. *Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1st December 1888.*

99. **Interior of a Church** by J. Bosboom, The Hague bought from Bosboom during our stay in Holland 1873. It was then unfinished price £50.

100. **View on the Thames – City Boundary** [Jules] Lessore (son of the painter on Wedgewood) Cottier £12. *Possibly included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888 as "Red lion Brewery on the Thames" 1874 (14 x 9½ in.).*

101. **Old Man and Old Woman** by a young Dutchman (I think) £5 each Cottier.

102. **Woodlands in Park** Sam Bough £10 from himself.

103. **Beach at Scheveningen** by J. Bosboom from himself £21. Sold 18/2/05 £126.0.0. *Exhibited Glasgow International 1901 (1226) as "Scheveningen Beach - Mid-day".*

104. **Dutch Fishing Village** by Madame den Bosch, bought from Bosboom (her mentor).

105. **Meerkirk** by A. Mollinger pencil sketch of the large oil painting of this subject which I have. (no. 10).

106. [no title given] pencil drawing by A. Mollinger. Sold 18/2/05 £4.4/-.

107. **Study of drapery – figures in grief** by Albert Moore. Price £3 got from the artist.

108. **Anthony of Trieste – Councillor of Ghent** original drawing by Van Dyck very fine got through Colnaghi & co. from the great sale of the collection of Dr Wellesley, Oxford 1866, price £10 unframed. The painting from this drawing is in the Louvre (1870 the

painting). Sold 18/2/05 £30.0.0. *Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (504)* as "Anton of Trieste, Senator of Ghent", drawing in black chalk, heightened with white.

Engravings, Etchings & C.

109. **The Virgin and Child** proof Lefevre after Murillo (unframed) bought at the sale of Mr Samuel Leith at Nisbets on 13 Feb[ruar]y 1858 no 116 of cat. 4/-.
110. **Portrait of a French Nobleman** proof by Bervie, Leith's sale no 122 unframed 6/-.
111. **Le Père de la Fiancée reglant sa dos** etching by Schmidt after Rembrandt & Flink. Leith's sale no 125 -8/- (now framed in dining room). *Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (508)*.
112. **The Fall of the Evil Angels** Lucas Vosterman after Rubens, Leith's sale no 152 - 23/- (now framed in lobby). *Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (535)*.
113. **The Holy Family** proof before letters, Bartolozzi & Müller after Coreggio, Leith's sale no 185 26/- (unframed).
114. **The Magdalene** - Pitou after Lebrun, Leith's sale 210 11/- (unframed).
115. **Man in Fur Cap** by Teniers after Rembrandt Leith's sale no 251 4/-.
116. **La Madonna di San Sisto** Second proof Nordheim after Raphael Leith's Sale no 265 £3.10/- framed. *Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (532) (with note "open letter proof")*.
117. **Portrait of Maurice Quentin de la Tour** - "The Laughing Painter" by Schmidt after himself, Leith's sale no 342 27/- *Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (444)*.
118. **Portrait of Jean de Boullangne** [sic] by Wille after Rigaud, Leith's sale no 349 20/- (in portfolio).
119. **The Holy Family** S.A. Bolswert after Rubens, Leith's sale no 456 44/- *Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (530)(as by Scheltius à Bolswert)*.
120. **The Masterpiece of Drevet** by Bossuet after Rigaud - a very early impression before any dots after the name at left hand corner, Leith's sale no 760 £3.6/- very fine (£15.15/- marked on the back). Sold 18/2/05 £3.5/-.
121. **La femme Hydropique** open letter proof very fine Claessens after Gerard Dow, Leith's sale no 822 £2.12.6. Sold 18/2/05 £1.10/-.
122. **The Transfiguration** by Desnoyers after Raffaele [sic] bought in Paris on Quai near Tourie (south side) for £3 unframed. *Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (446)(with note "proof before letters")*.

123. **Etching** by Daubigny after Ruysdael bought through Colnaghi after seeing them in the French dept. of the Exhibition 1862 (London) 21/- (I think).
124. Companion to the above.
125. **Portrait of Tennyson Stephenson** after G.F. Watts very fine proof from Colnaghi about 1864.
126. **The Sister of Mercy** after Henrietta Brown got through Colnaghi about 1863 *Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (538a) as "Sisters of Charity" by Barlow after Henriette Brown.*
127. **Group of Cherubs** engraved by Toschi after Coreggio – part of the great picture of the Coronation of the Virgin at Pavena (in Library). There parts of the original exist no longer having fallen to pieces. They are known only through Caracci's copy.
128. Companion to foregoing bought together in a shop in Pavena for about £1 each in 1864.
129. **St Herbert** etching by Albert Durer, Middling impression bought at Pavena (with the foregoing) for about £1.5/-.
130. **Abraham Frauz** etching by Rembrandt – very fine got through Colnaghi & Co from Dr Wellesley's sale.
131. [no title given] etching by Claude Lorraine got through Colnaghi & Co from Dr Wellesley's sale. 1866. *Possibly Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (507)(as "The Seaport with great Tower" – fine second impression).*
132. **Madonna della Gran Duca** (Pitti Galleria, Florence) Raphael Morgen after Raphael very fine proof got at Colnaghi & Co's sale in 1867 (March) £10 unframed. *Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (485)(with note "open letter proof").*
133. **The Old Temeraire** Willmore after Turner, very fine proof before letters got at Colnaghi's sale. March 1867 £6 unframed. Sold 18/2/05 £4.10/. *Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (474)(with note "proof before letters").*
134. **Breaking up of the Agamemnon** by Seymour Haden – etching very early impression – before the introduction of the dockyard sheds. Got from Colnaghi & Co. 1871. £5.5/- (frame by Cottier £2). *Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (447).*
135. **Liber Studiorum** Sold 18/2/05 £139.18/-. From this White lent nine plates to the Aberdeen Art Exhibition in 1873, namely;

Crypt, Kirkstall Abbey

drawn, etched & engraved by J.M.W. Turner (*cat no. 464*).

Solway Moss

drawn & etched by J.M.W. Turner, engraved by Thomas Lupton (*cat no. 465*).

The Mildmay Sea Piece

drawn & etched by J.M.W. Turner, engraved by W. Annis (*cat no. 466*).

The Falls of Clyde

drawn & etched by J.M.W. Turner, engraved by Charles Turner (*cat no. 477*).

Raglan Castle

drawn, etched & engraved by J.M.W. Turner (*cat no. 478*).

The Peat Bog

drawn & etched by J.M.W. Turner, engraved by G. Clint (*cat no. 479*).

Chepstow, River Wye

drawn & etched by J.M.W. Turner, engraved by W. Annis (*cat no. 480*).

Norham Castle

drawn & etched by J.M.W. Turner, engraved by Charles Turner (*cat no. 481*).

The Lock and The Mill

drawn & etched by J.M.W. Turner, engraved by W. Say (*cat no. 482*).

II. List of Paintings, watercolours, engravings and etchings known to have belonged to John Forbes White but not listed in his own hand written record of his collection.

Oil Paintings

136. **Aitchie** by G.P. Chalmers 1874 *Aberdeen Art Gallery* (plate 23).

137. **The Dragon's Cavern** c1877 by Paul Falconer Poole. *Aberdeen Art Gallery* (plate 53).

138. **Waterlilies** c1880 by Willem Roelofs. *Aberdeen Art Gallery* (plate 67).

139 **Le Passeur (The Ferryman)** 1881-2 by William Stott of Oldham Third Class Medal Paris Salon 1882. 84 x 42 in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888. *Private collection*. (plate 68).

140 **Portrait of Alice** by William Stott of Oldham. By descent through the White family. *Private collection*. (Plate 69).

141. **Portrait – Opal and Grey – Rachel White** 1897 by Arthur Melville. (plate 84). 73 ½ x 34 ½ in. Exhibited Society of portrait Painters 1897, RI 1906(43) Newcastle 1906(39) GIFA 1907(67) Nottingham 1907(14). Reproduced in "Studio" May 1906.

142. **The Brown Woman – Miss White** by Arthur Melville. 74 ½ x 35 ½ in. Unfinished. RI 1906 (40) GIFA 1907 (57).

143. **Guessing the Catch** A.D. Reid. 39½ x 21½ in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.

144. **A Highland Funeral** by James Guthrie RA 1882 Exhibited RA 1882, Glasgow Institute & Edinburgh International 1886. 76 x 51 in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888. *Glasgow Art Gallery & Museums* (plate 73).

145. **A Spanish Nobleman** by G.P. Chalmers. 30 x 37½ in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
146. **At Newhaven** by J. May 11½ x 6½ in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
147. **Landscape with Wagon & Figures** by Wynants. 12 x 9 in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
148. **The Pleasures of Hope** by G.P.Chalmers RSA 1867. Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (211) and included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
149. **Anemone Japonica** by George Reid. 10½ x 22½ in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
150. **Sweet William** by A.D. Reid. 12½ x 18½ in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
151. **Sea Beach near Arbroath** by G.P.Chalmers 1872. 17½ x 11½ in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
152. **By the Sea** by Kate Hall. Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (231), 18 x 12 in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
153. **Swedish Peasants in a Church** by Hilda Montalba. 13½ x 20 in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
154. **Dutch Canal** by A. Burke HRA. 14½ x 9 in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
155. **Interior, Ecoeu** by Edouard Frère. 10 x 12 in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
156. **Daffodils** by George Reid. 10½ x 20 in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
157. **The Skipper's Children** by Joseph Israels 1877. 21 x 30 in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
158. **A Church Procession** by Isaac Israels. 29½ x 17in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
159. **On Loch Etive** Horatio MacCulloch RSA. 10½ x 7½ in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.

160. **St Mary's Loch** by George Reid RSA Exhibited RSA 1888. 54½ x 41½ in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
161. **Grace Before Meat - A Sketch** by G.P. Chalmers (From Chalmers' Sale). 11½ x 10½ in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
162. **The Staircase Links House, Montrose** by G.P. Chalmers. Exhibited Glasgow International 1901 (148).
163. **Mrs White** by G.P. Chalmers. Exhibited Glasgow International 1901(180).
164. **Early Morning** by G.P. Chalmers. Exhibited Glasgow International 1901(246).
165. **Roses** by George Reid. Exhibited Glasgow International 1901(620).

Watercolours & Drawings

166. **Ina White, John Forbes White's wife, seated in their Private Gallery** by Arthur Melville. By descent through the White family. *Private collection*. (plate 83).
167. **The Body of Our Saviour** by Fra Bartolomeo, first design for picture in Pitti Palace (from Dr Wellesley's collection) Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (503).
168. **The Sweetie Stall** by J. May. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
169. **The Cottage Door** by J. May 7 x 9 in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
170. **At Blantyre** by Sam Bough RSA. 9½ x 7½ in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
171. **Pair – Dutch Peasants** by Hovenaar. 4 x 7½ in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
172. **Fisher Girl** by J. May. 4½ x 6½ in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
173. **Shipping on the Thames** by Samuel Owen. 3½ x 4 in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
174. **A Farm Yard** by A.D. Longmuir. 13½ x 6½ in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.

175. **The Court of The Myrtles, Alhambra** by A.D. Reid 14 x 20½ in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
176. **Chioggia Boats** 1879 by Clara Montalba. 10 x 14 in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
177. **Venice, Riva della Schivione** by W. Wyld. 14 x 9 in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
178. **Market Place, Granada** by Robert W. Allan RSA. 18½ x 25½ in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
179. **Man with Donkey** by A. Mollinger. 10½ x 8½ in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
180. **A Woman of Lucca** by A. Mollinger. 9 x 17 in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
181. **At Scheveningen** by Mddle. Van Bosje. 21 x 13½ in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
182. **Landscape with Castle and Town** by De Wint. 13 x 9 in.
Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
183. **Interior of Old Machar's Cathedral - The Painter's Window** by W.E. Lockhart RSA. 13½ x 19½ in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
184. **A Spanish Courtyard** by W.E. Lockhart RSA. 16 x 11½ in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
185. **A Street in Granada** by A.D. Reid. 15 x 20½ in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
186. **Old Pier at Stonehaven** by Robert W. Allan RSW. 20½ x 15 in. Included in sale of White's collection at Dowells, Edinburgh 1 December 1888.
187. **Religious Procession, Brittany** by Leon L'Hermitte. Exhibited Glasgow International 1901 (70) (Black and White Gallery).
188. **Gellius de Bouma** drawn & engraved by Cornelius Vissher. Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (430).
189. **Le Buisson** etched by Charles Daubigny after Jacob Ruisdael. Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (445).

190. **Portrait of Bossuet** P. Drevet after Rigaud (early impression). Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (448).

191. **Le Coup de Soleil** etched by Charles Daubigny after Jacob Ruisdael. Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (449).

192. **The Age of Innocence** etched by Charles Turner after Sir Joshua Reynolds, proof before letters. Exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (484).

Modern French etchings (not itemised) by Daubigny, Lalanne & Appian exhibited Aberdeen Art Exhibition 1873 (510).

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Plate 1

Group Photograph - The Society Of Old Deer 6 September 1878
 Photograph By Lamb

City of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums

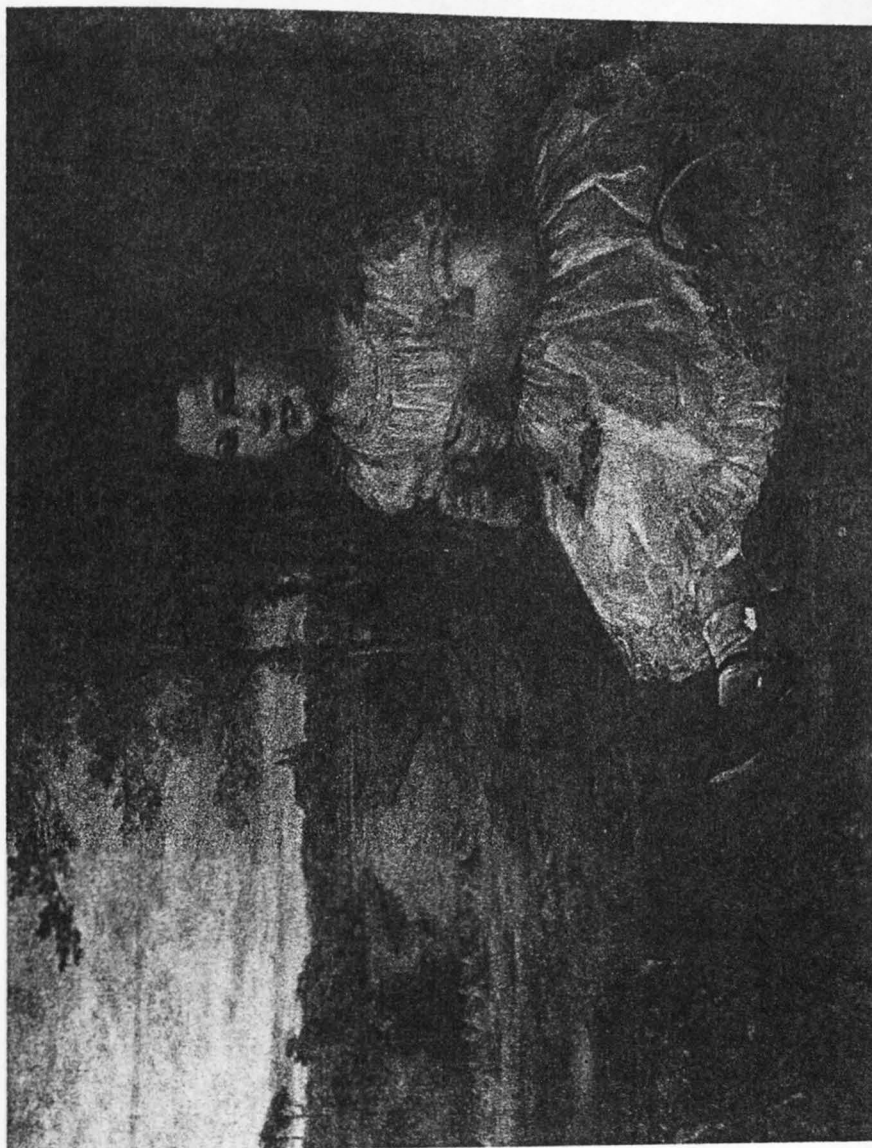
Standing: George Reid and John Forbes White, Alexander Macdonald seated between them.



Plate 2

**George Reid, when a young boy, standing with his
mother and maternal grandmother.**

City of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums

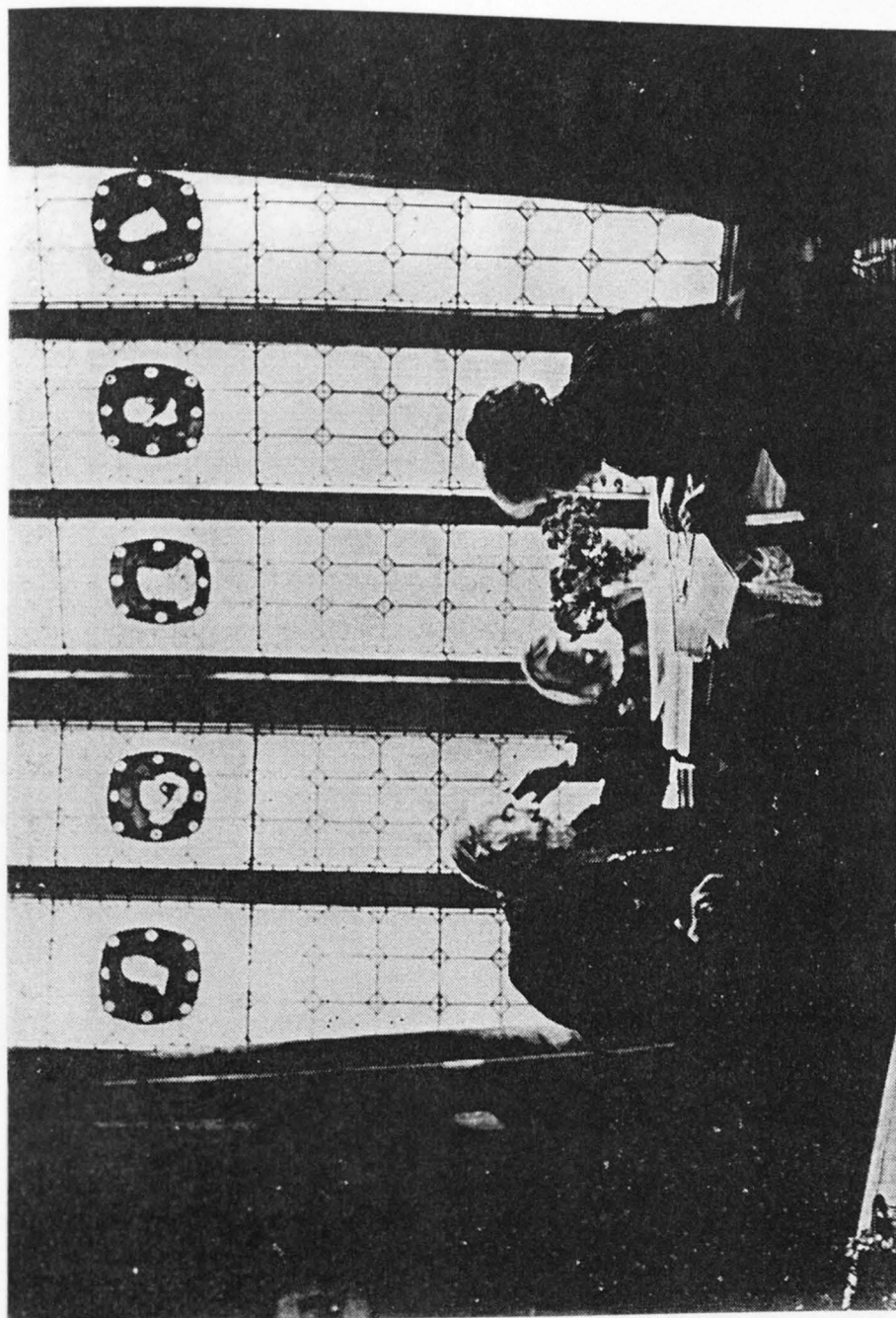


Miss Blanche Geddes 1864 By Sir George Reid PRSA
untraced



Plate 4

Seaton Cottage by John Forbes White
City of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums



John Forbes White With His Daughters Ina And Dorothea Seated In The Dining Room At Seaton Cottage. 1893

Photograph Unknown

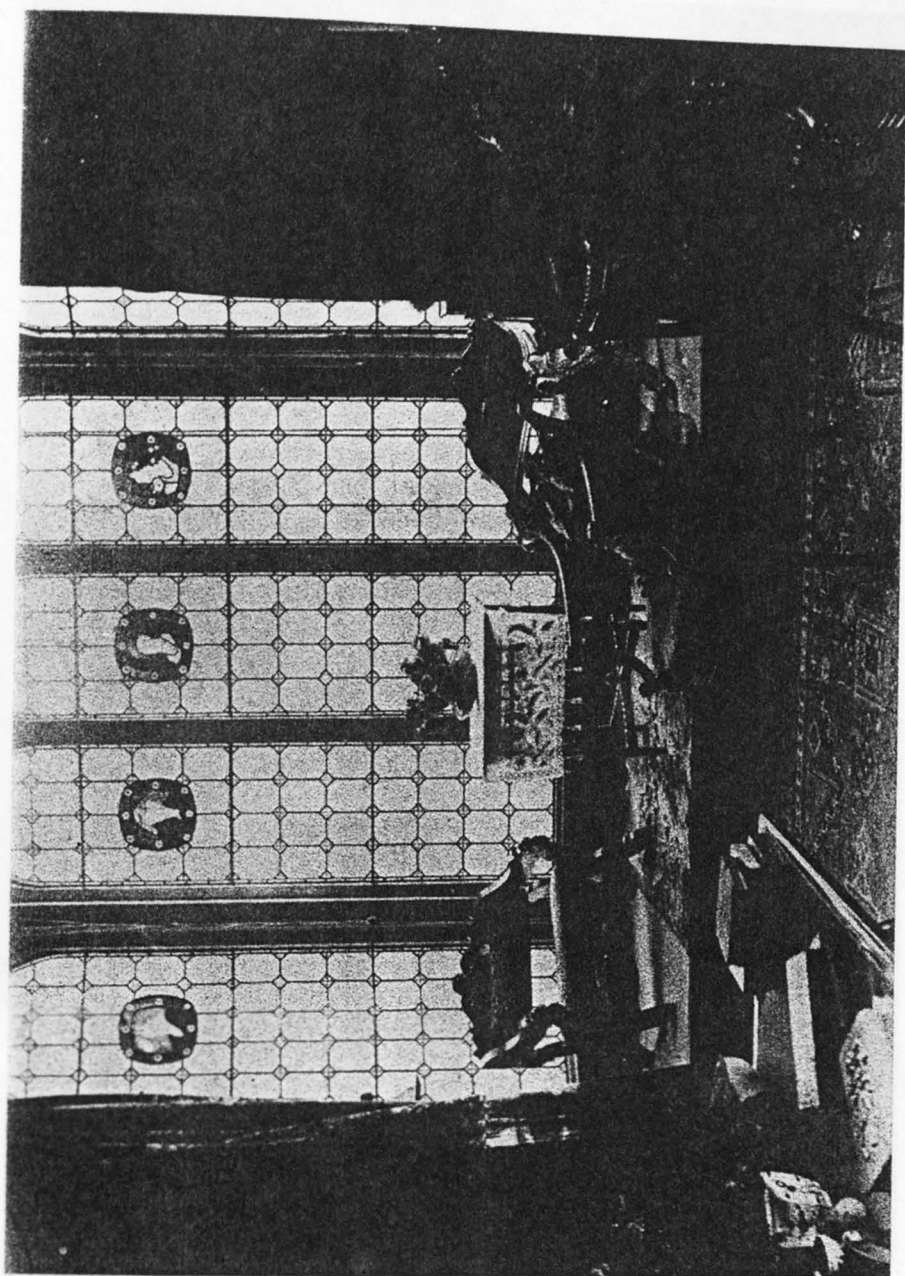


Plate 6

Interior of Seaton Cottage

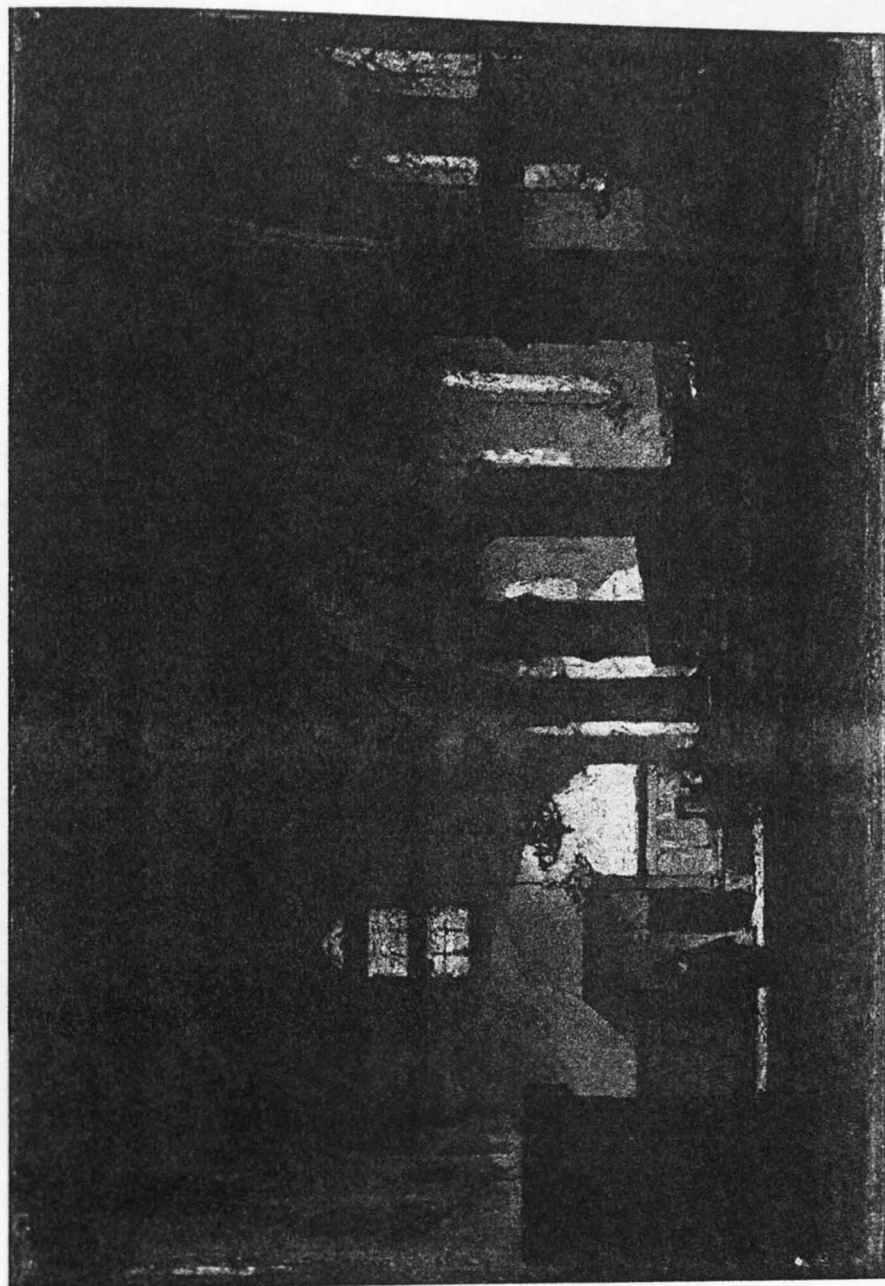




Plate 8

The Orphan (formerly Hearing the Word, An Attentive Hearer of The Word & An Attentive Hearer.) 1866 by Sir George Reid PRSA
City of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums



Plate 9

The Pulpit Stair 1865 by Sir George Reid PRSA

City of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums

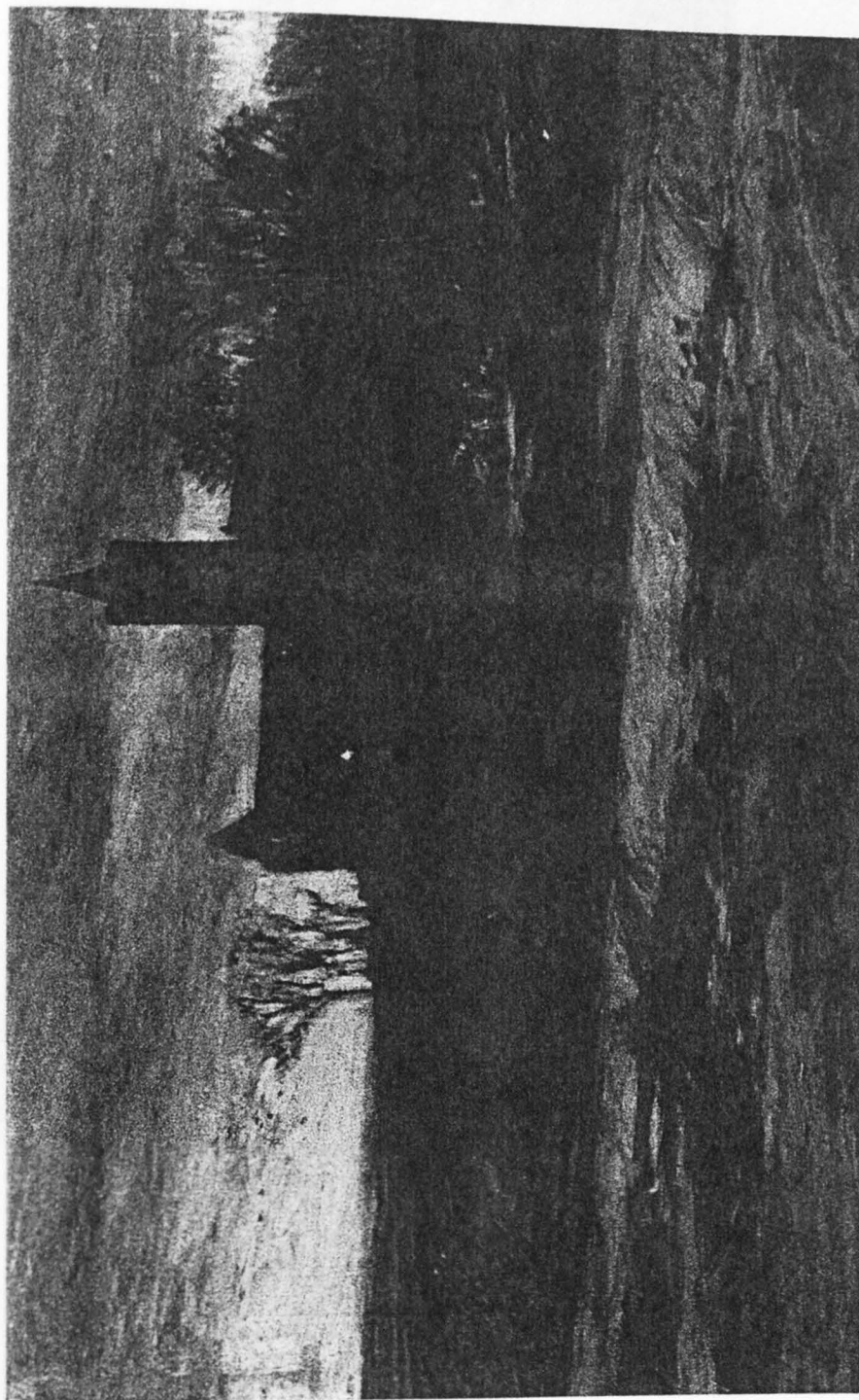


Plate 10

Dunblane Cathedral 1868 by Sir George Reid PRSA
City of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums Collections



Plate 11

Landscape, Derbyshire c. 1870 by George Heming Mason
Manchester City Art Galleries



Plate 12 **At Seaton Cottage on the Don** by Sir George Reid PRSA
City of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums



Montrose 1888 by Sir George Reid PRSA
City of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums

Plate 13



Plate 14

Le Bonheur d'une Mere 1868 by David Adolphe
Constant Artz
City of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums

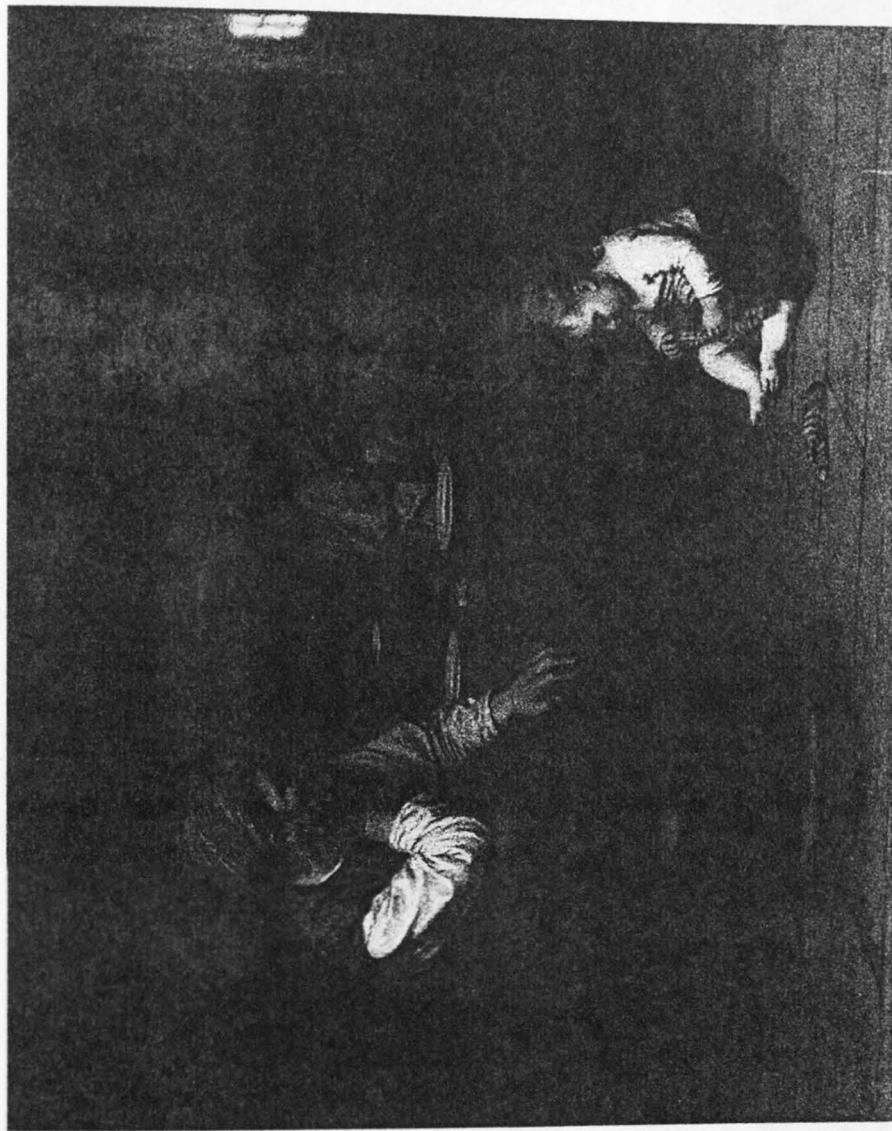


Plate 15

Mother's Joy 1868 by David Adolphe Constant Artz
City Of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums





Plate 17

George Washington Wilson 1879 Sir George Reid
PRSA oil on canvas
City of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums



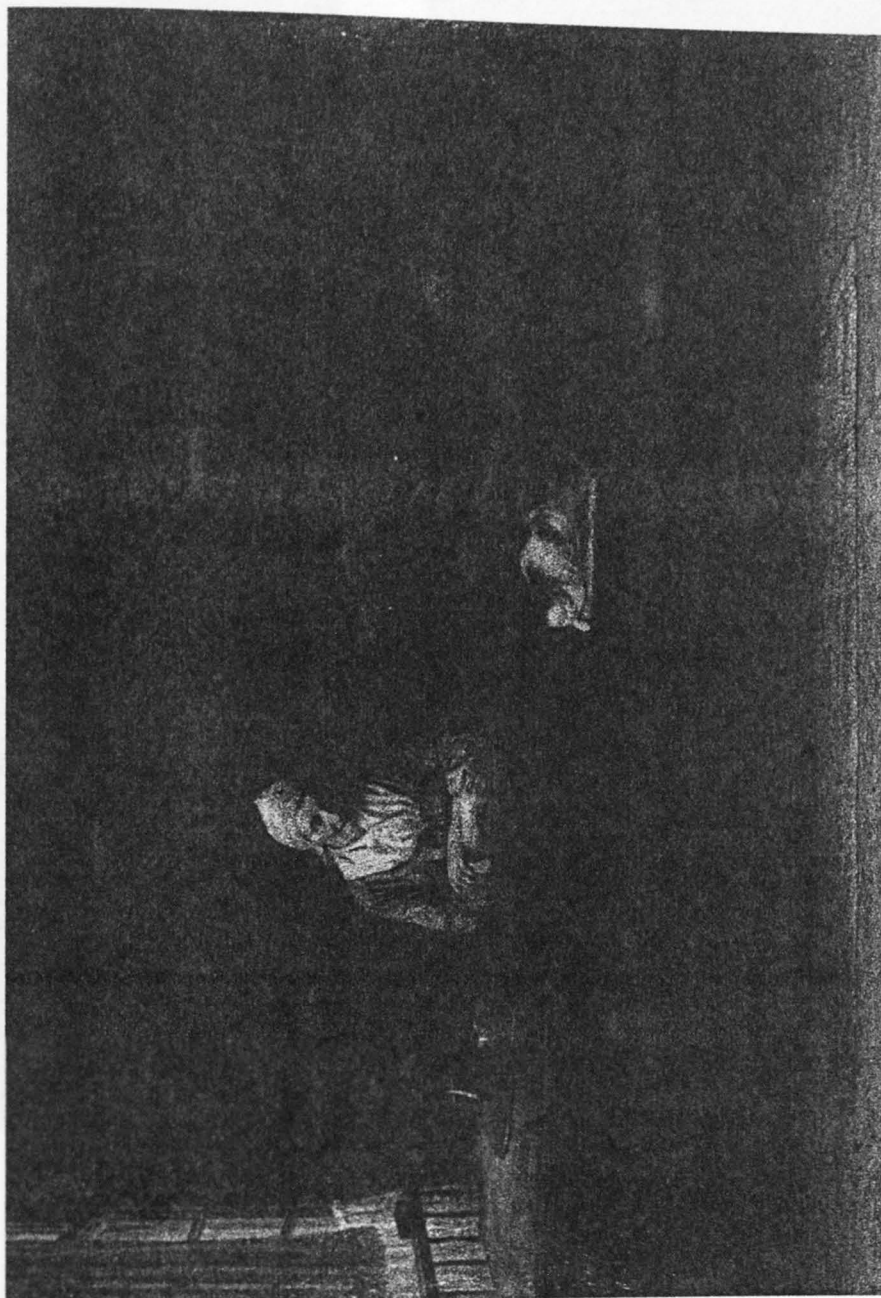
Plate 18

Portrait of Josef Israels 1870 by Sir George Reid PRSA
with Hugh Cameron RSA RSW, George Paul Chalmers
RSA and Josef Israels HRSA
City of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums



Plate 19

The Errand 1871 by Josef Israels
City Of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums



The Sleepers c. 1868 Josef Israels
City of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums

Plate 20

Plate 21 *George Bell by George Peter Chalmers R.S.A.*
City of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums



Plate 21

George Reid by George Paul Chalmers RSA
City of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums



Sketch for "The Legend" by George Paul Chalmers RSA
City of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums



Plate 23

Aitchie 1874 by George Paul Chalmers RSA
City of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums



Plate 24

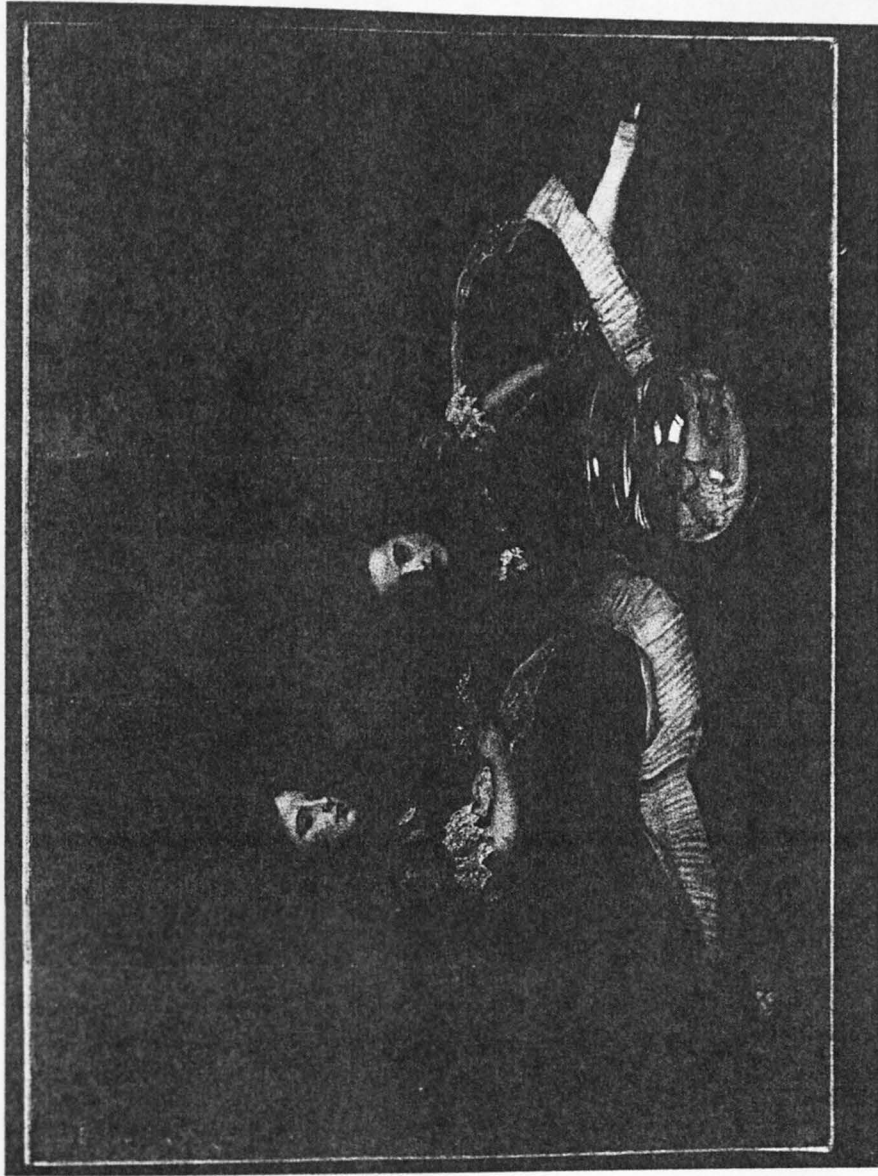
**Ina Mary Harrower (Née White) In Dutch
Costume**
John Harrower

making detail studies of some of the
bits during the last two days - do
you think this sort of thing will



do? Mr
Mackintosh
tells me that
whenever I
want the
chesses to

make the time study for the figures
to come into London with him
and he will show me all the
frost stuff in his place and I
can choose anything I like and
he will have it made up in
any way I ~~like~~ ^{prefer} - I will make
nothing but the time studies here
as I would prefer painting the
picture at his place in Perth-
shire in July and August. -



Leisure Hours 1864 by Sir John Everett Millais PRA
Detroit Institute Of Arts

Plate 26



Plate 27

The Painters' Window Stained Glass Window At St Machar's Cathedral by Daniel Cottier

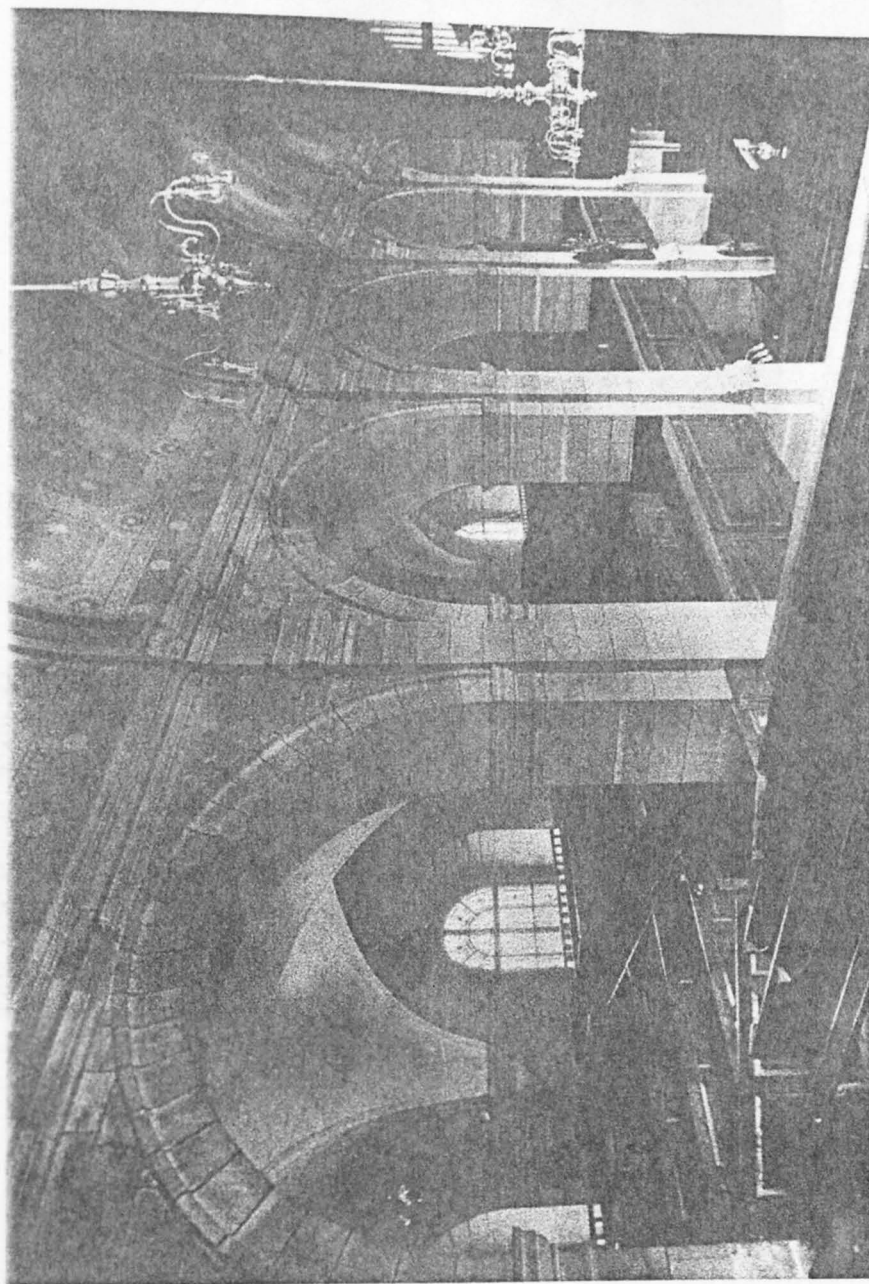


Plate 28

The Interior of The West Church of St Nicholas, Aberdeen 1950s
Church Of Scotland: St Nicholas Cathedral

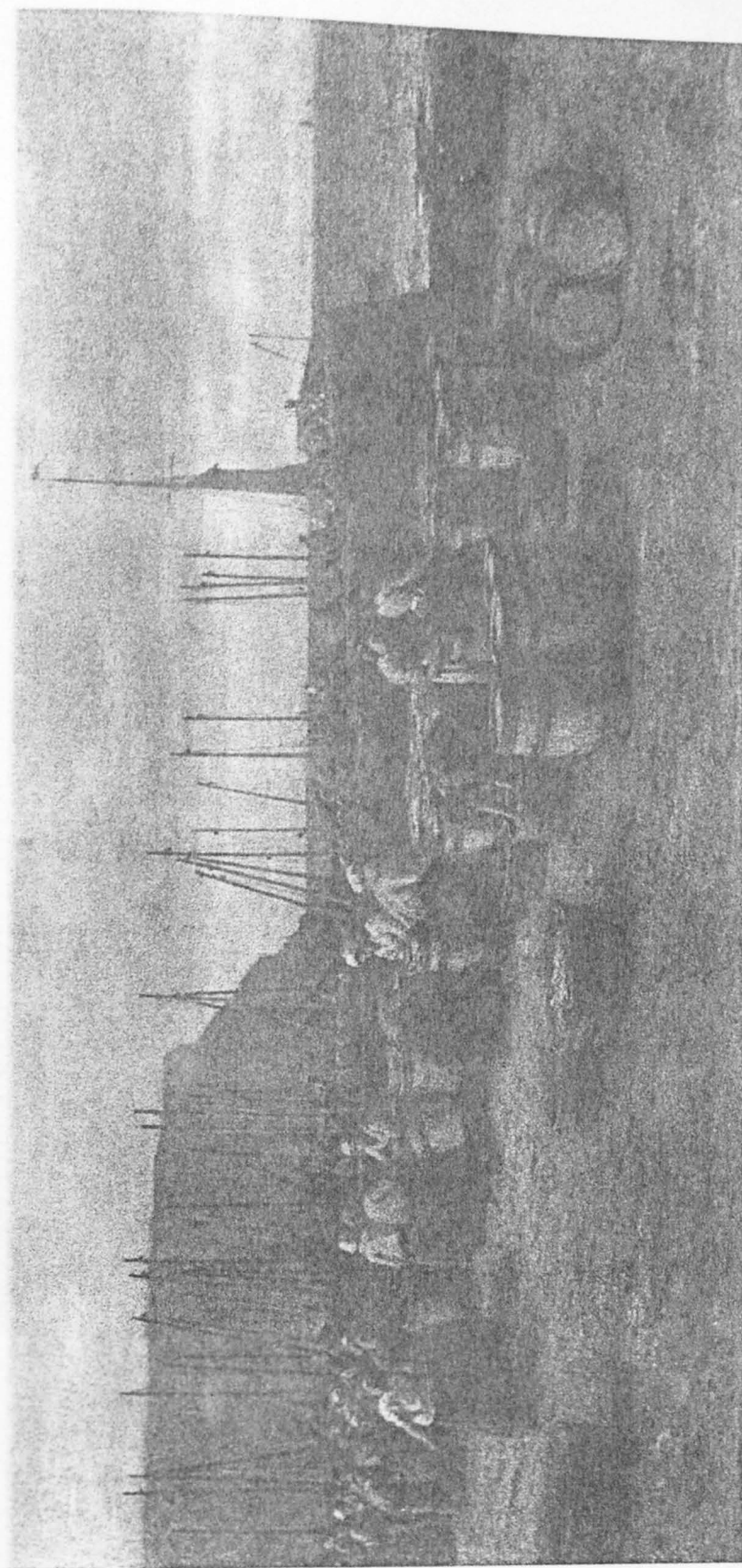
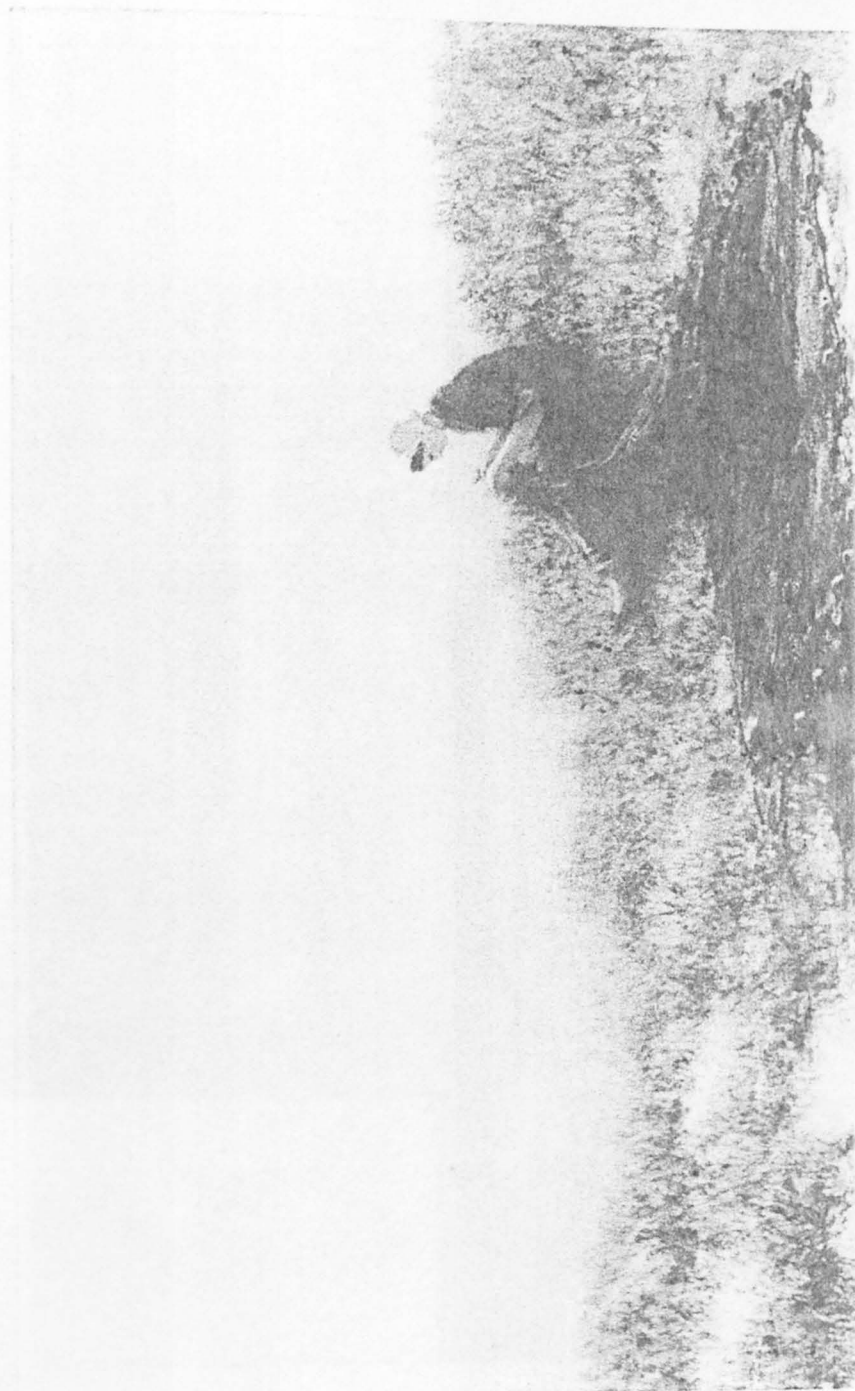
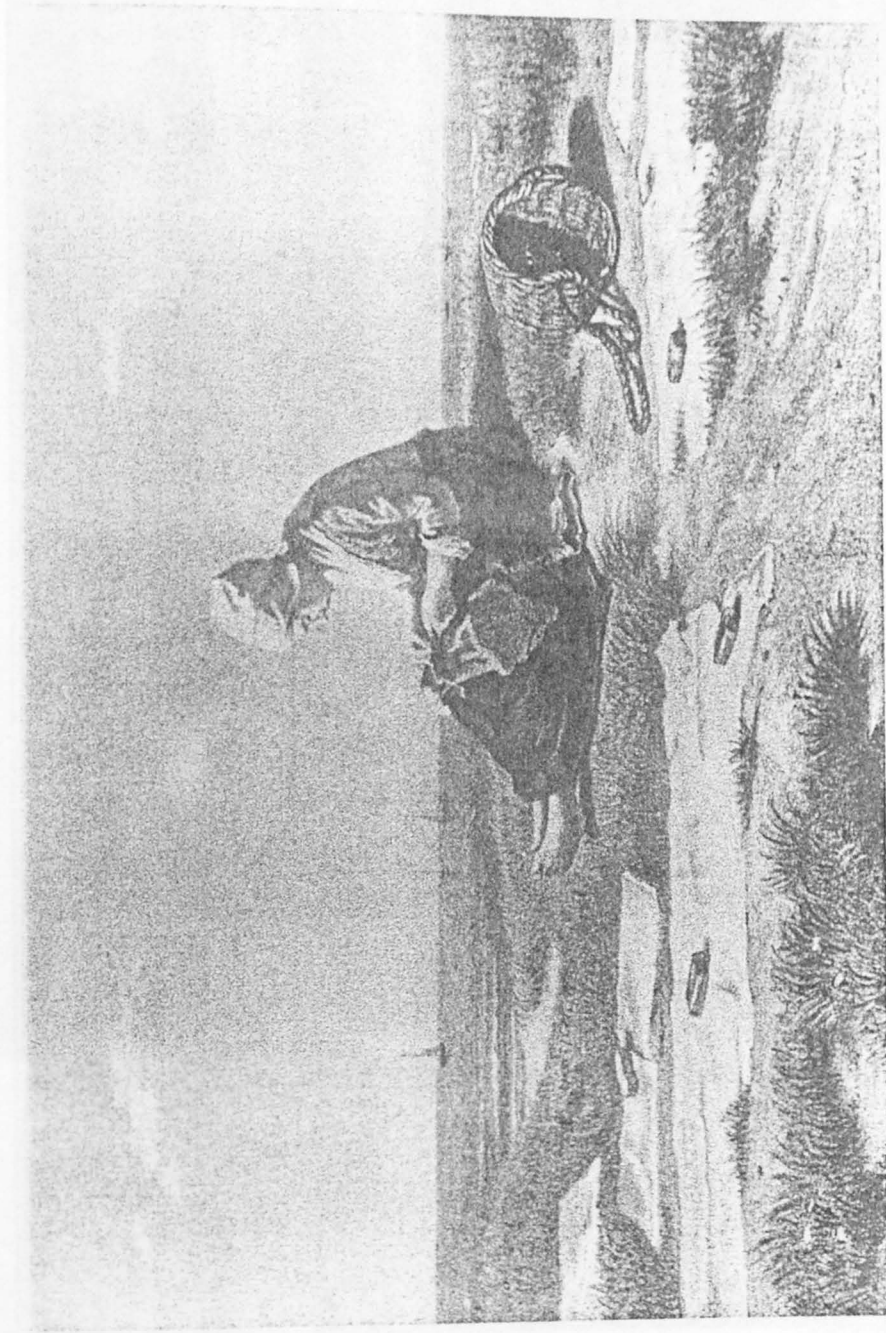


Plate 29

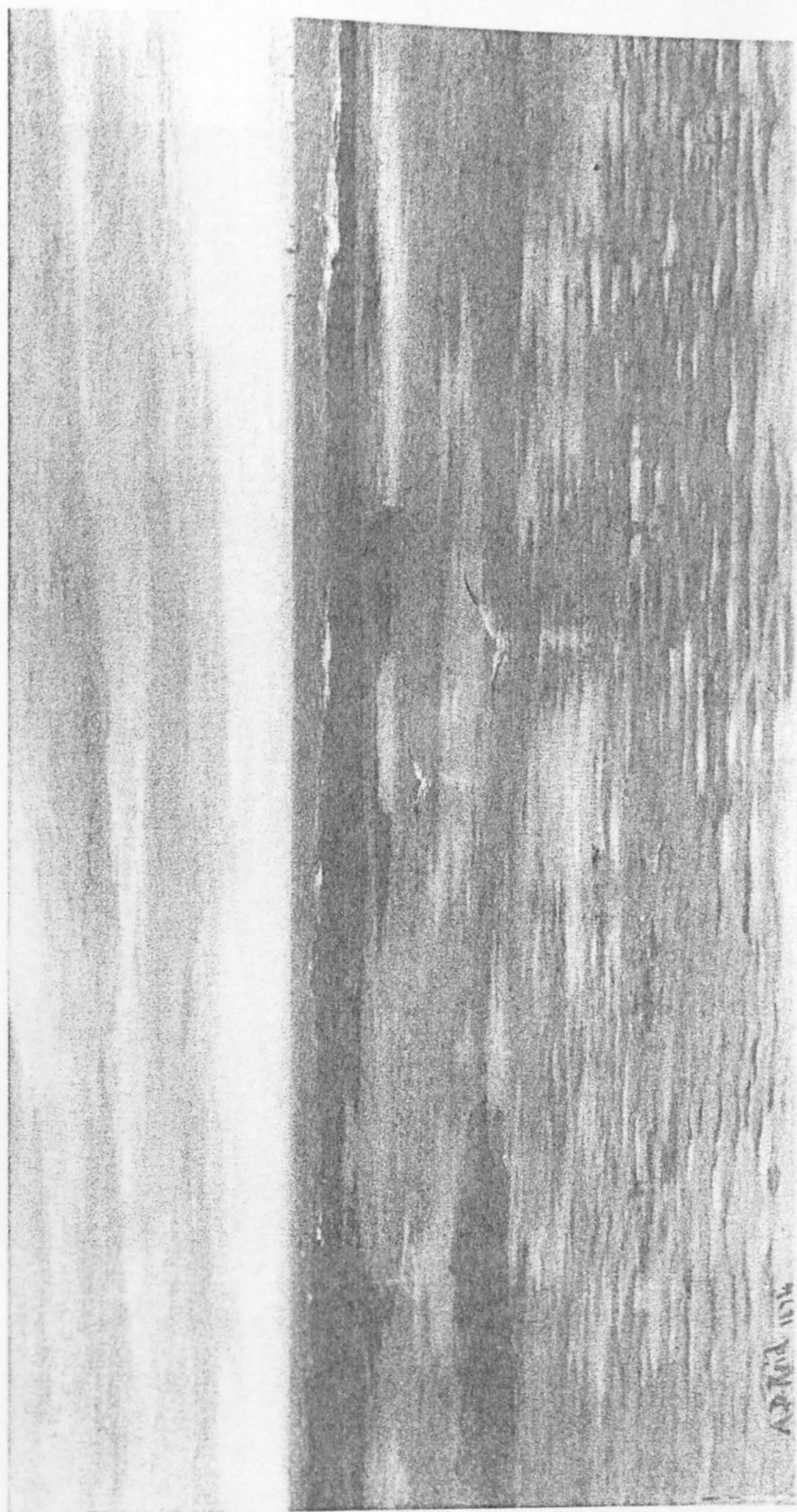
The Herring Harvest c.1873 by Archibald Reid RSA RSW
City Of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums.

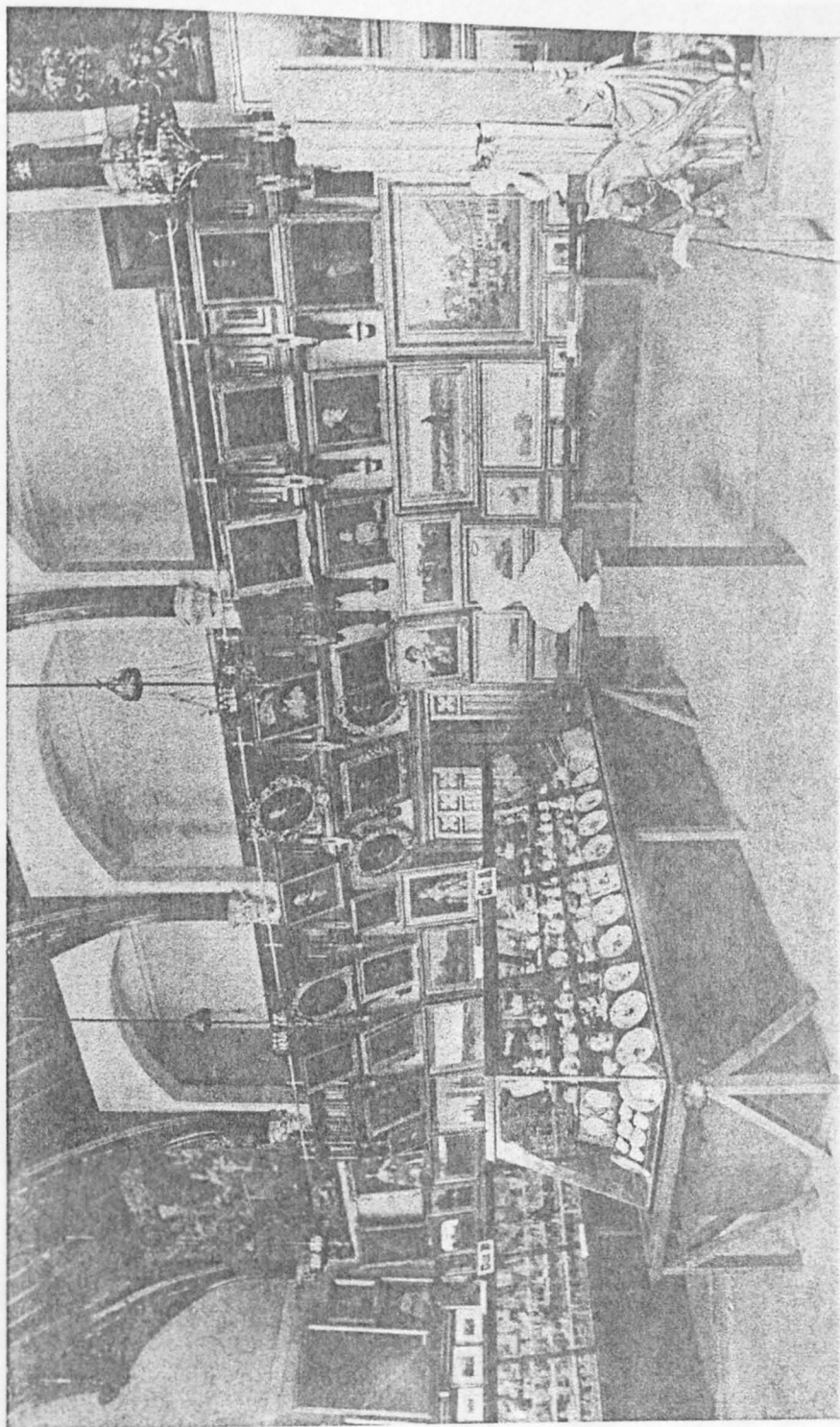


On The Bents (Formerly The Netmender) 1873 by Archibald Reid ARSA RSW
City Of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums



In the Dunes by Josef Israels
untraced





Exhibition Of Art In The Town & County Hall, Aberdeen Town House, 1873 - Looking North.

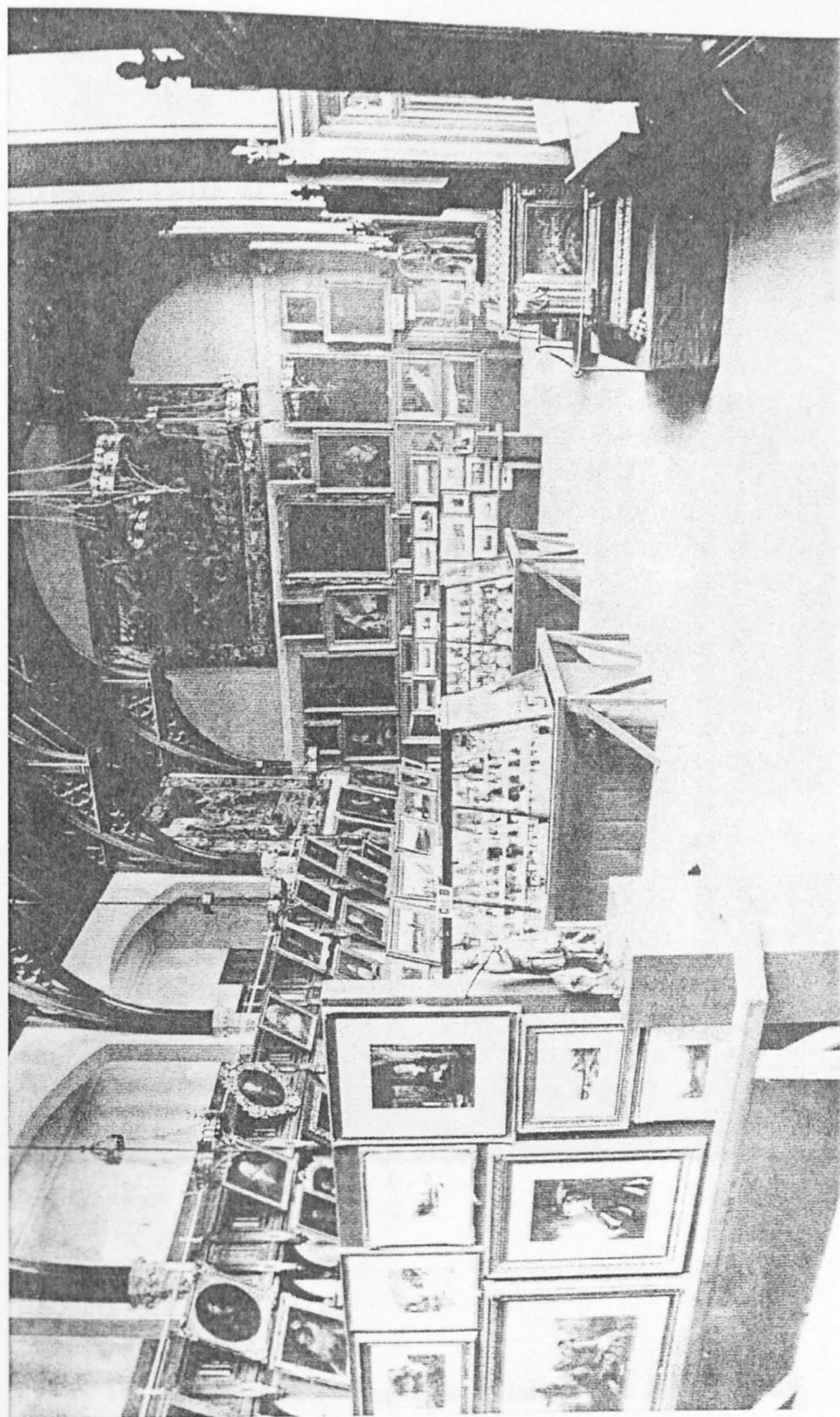




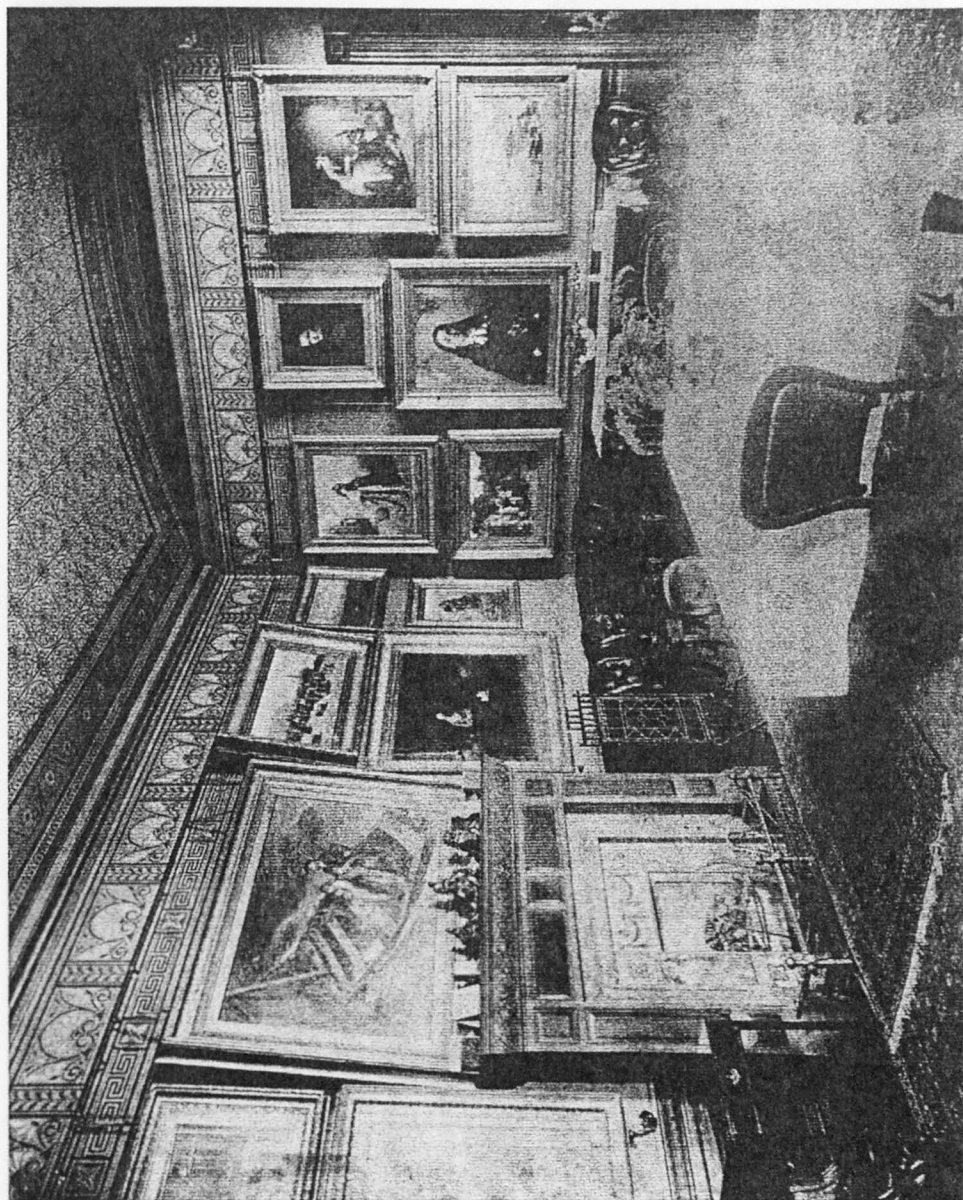
Plate 35

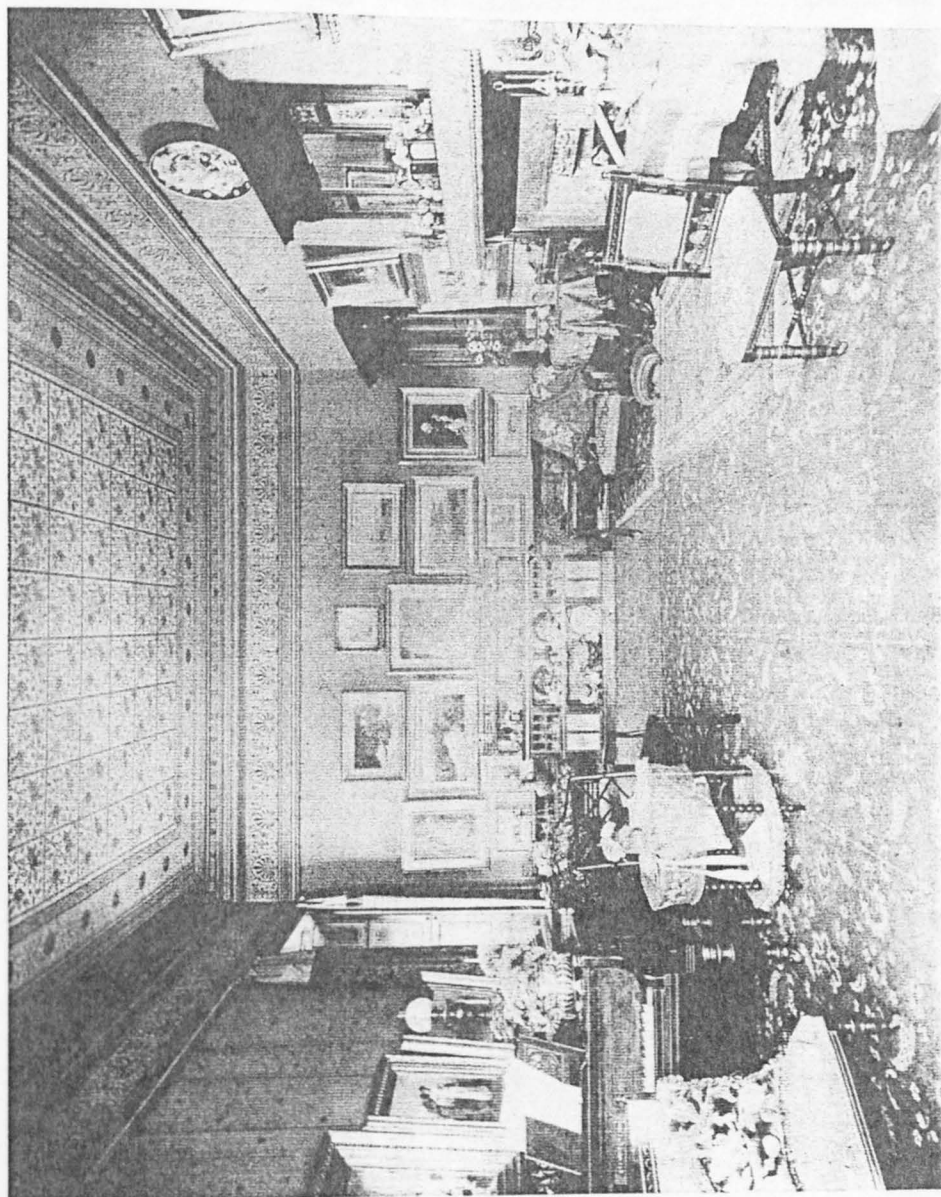
Pastorale - Souvenir d'Italie c1873 Jean Baptiste
Camille Corot
Glasgow Art Galleries



Plate 36

Dutch Interior with Mother and Child by Joseph Farquharson *untraced* (photograph taken from the artist's photograph album, in the possession of the artist's family)







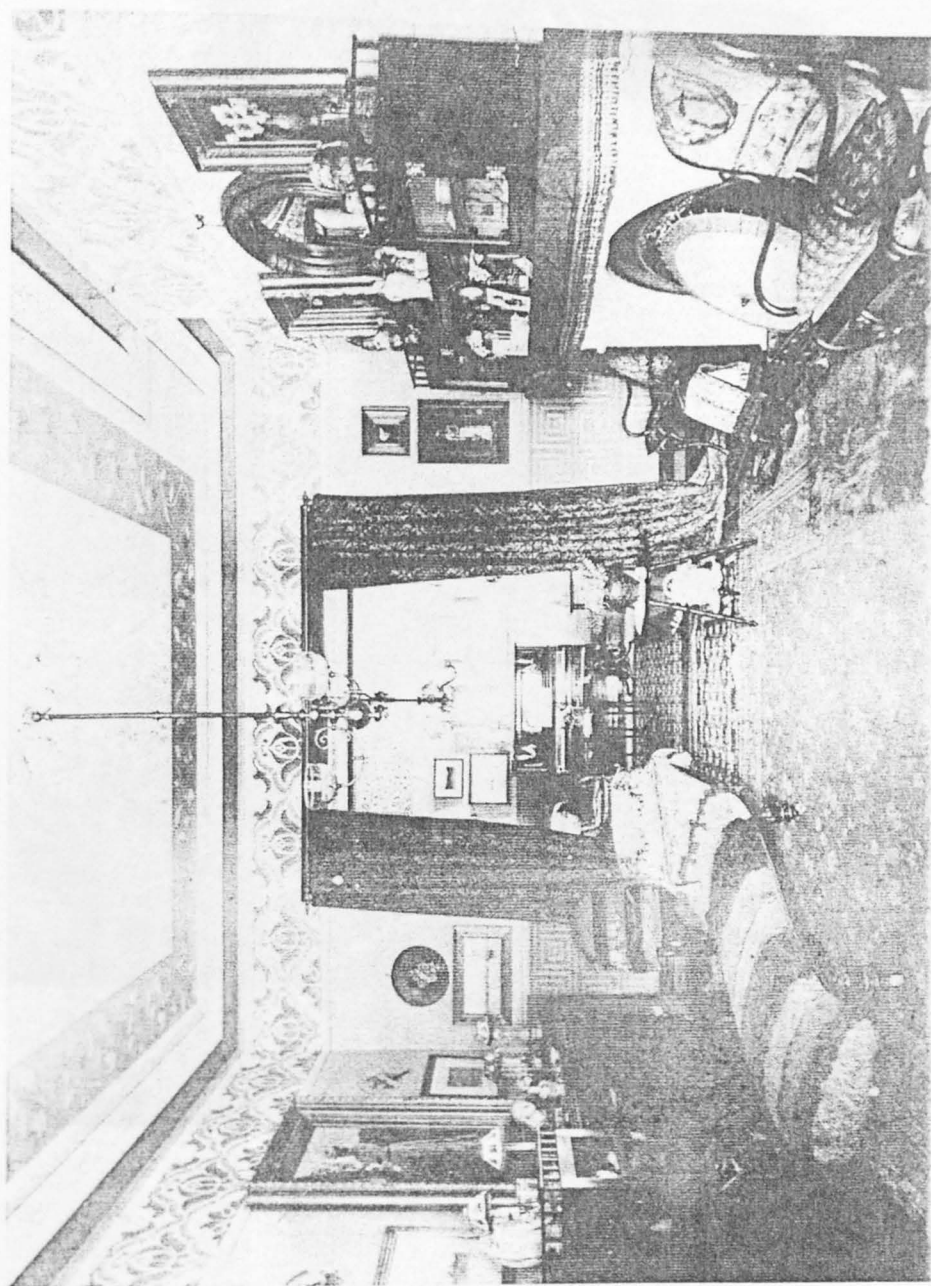


Plate 40 The Sitting Room, Kepplestone



Plate 41

The Gleaner 1875 by Jules Breton
City of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums



Plate 42 Notes & Sketches - Mathilde Israel 1876 by Sir George Reid PRSA

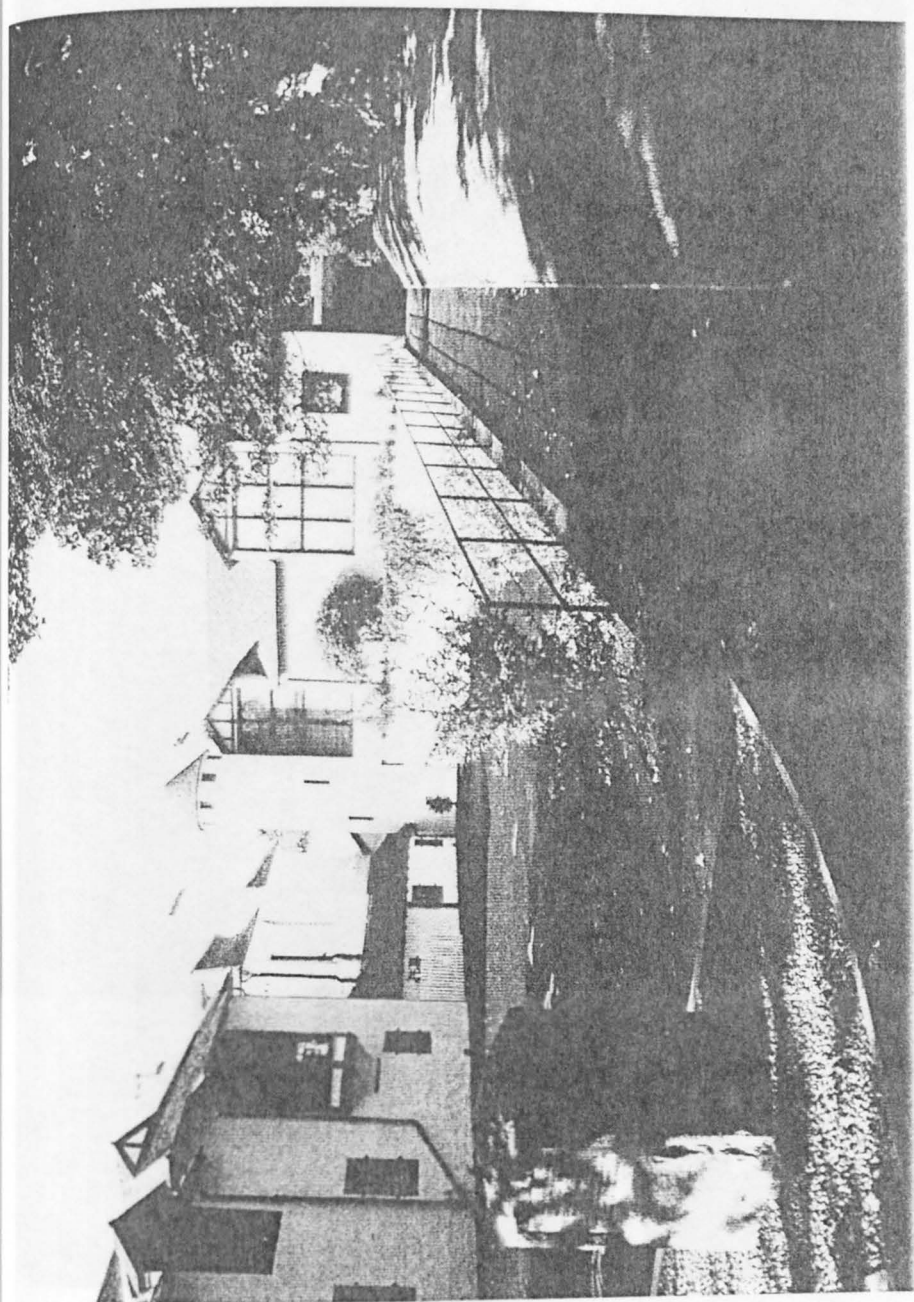


Plate 43 St Lukes

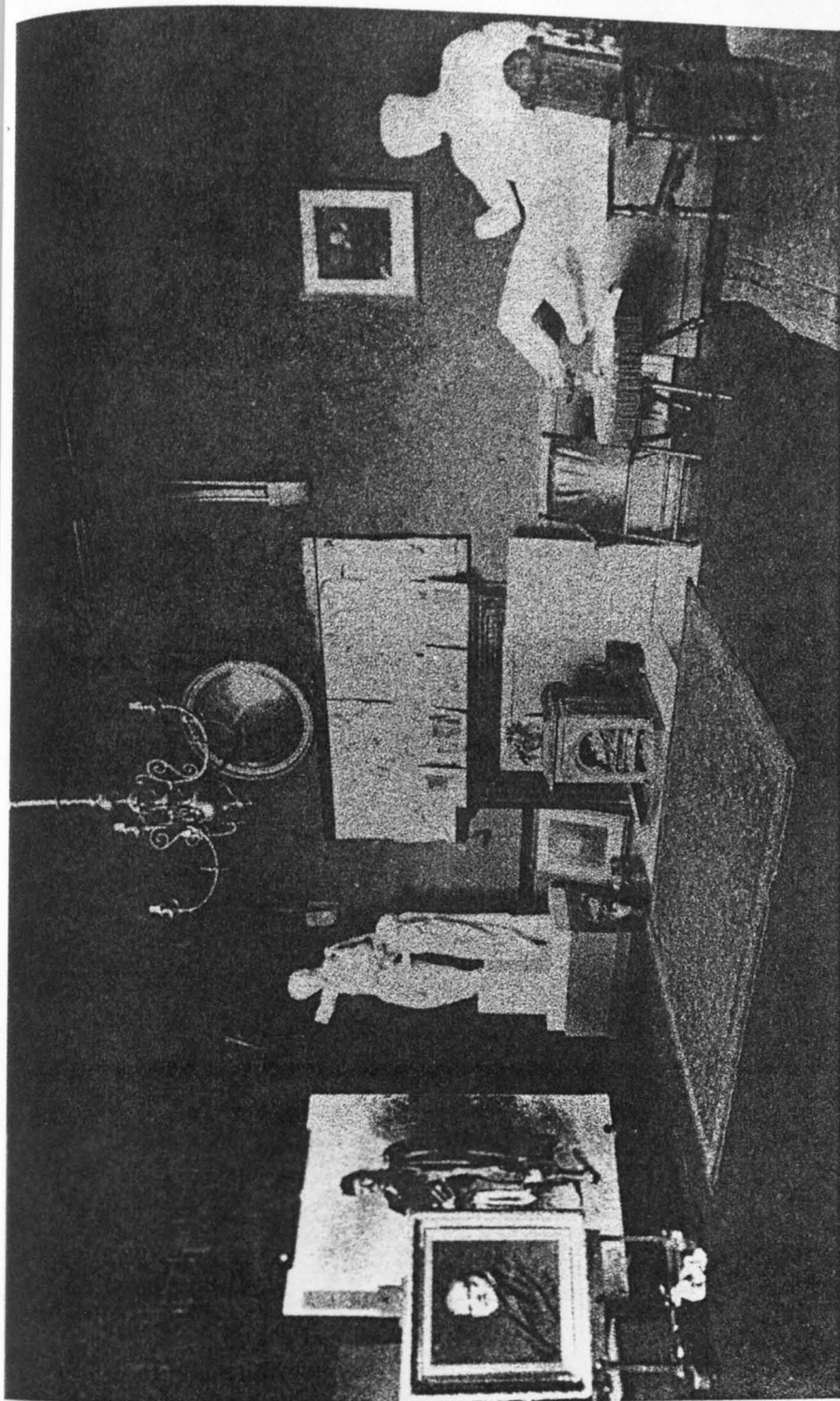


Plate 44 George Reid's Studio at St Lukes 1878, looking south east.

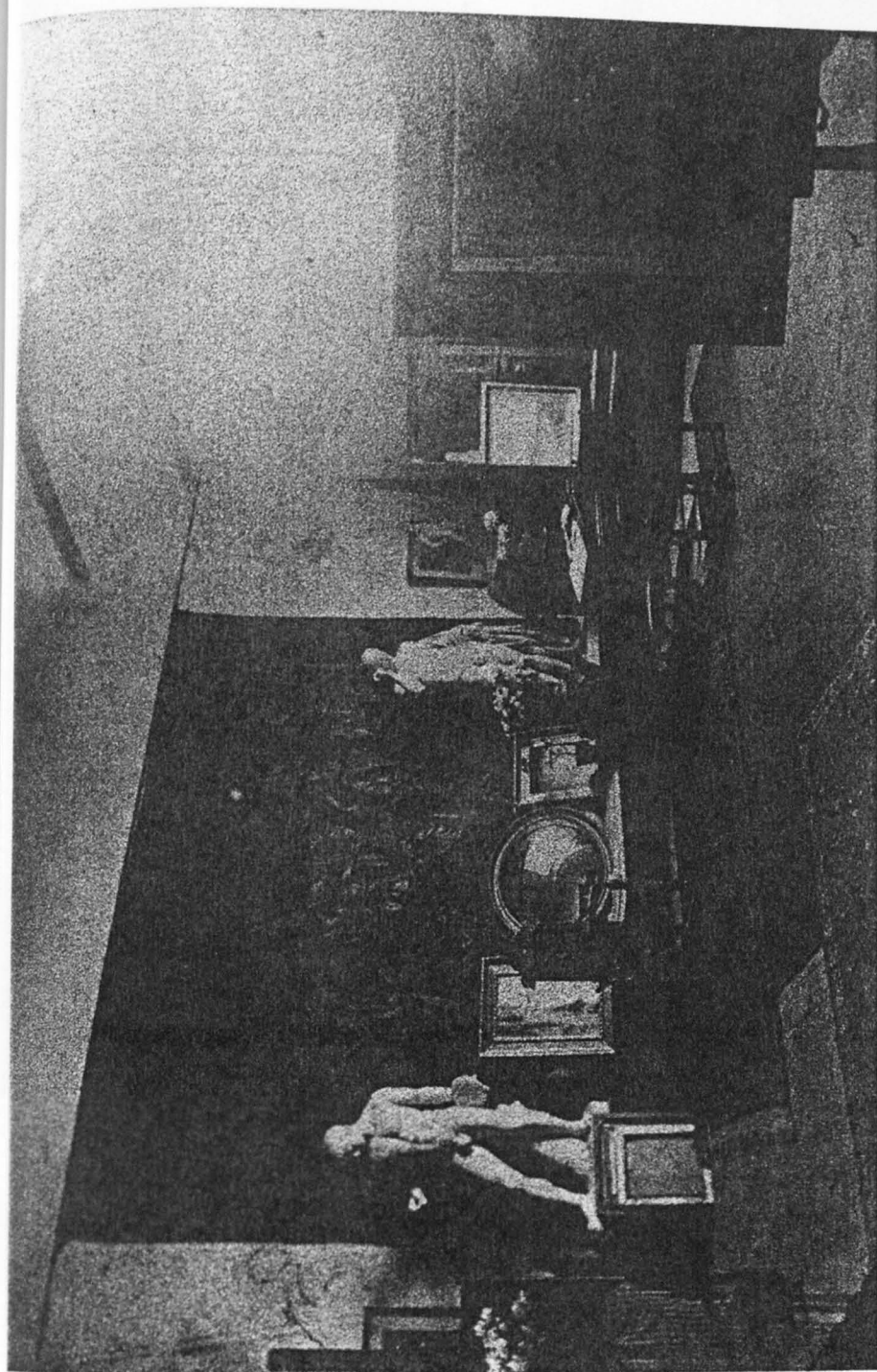


Plate 45 George Reid's Studio at St Luke's 1878, looking north west.

Plate 46 In The Garden At Aberdeen - A Portrait of Mrs. David and her son
1869 by Sir George Reid P.R.S.A.
City Of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museum



In The Garden At Auchlunies - A Portrait of Mrs Duguid and her son
1869 by Sir George Reid PRSA
City Of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums

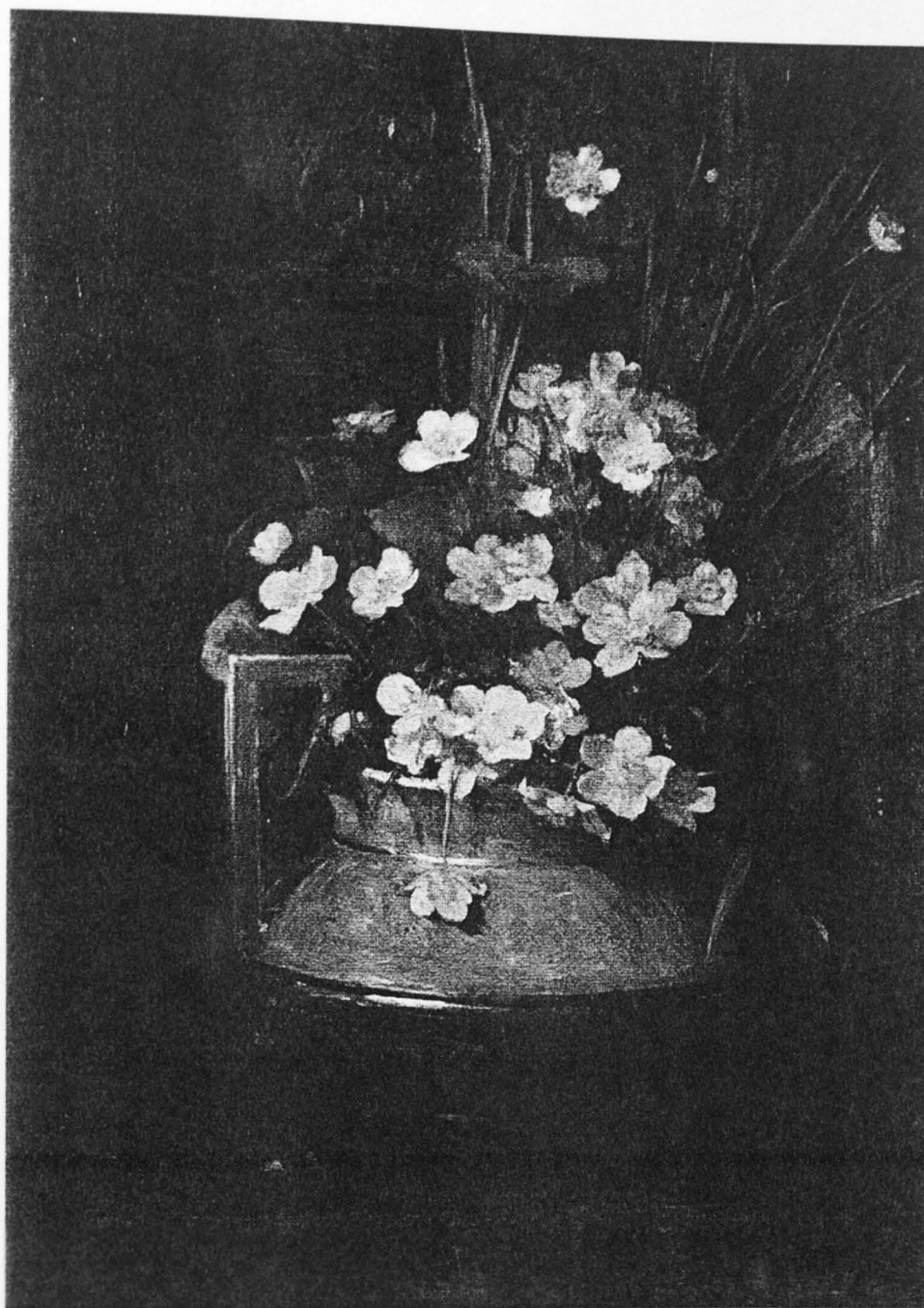


Plate 47

Marsh Marigolds 1878 Sir George Reid PRSA
City of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums

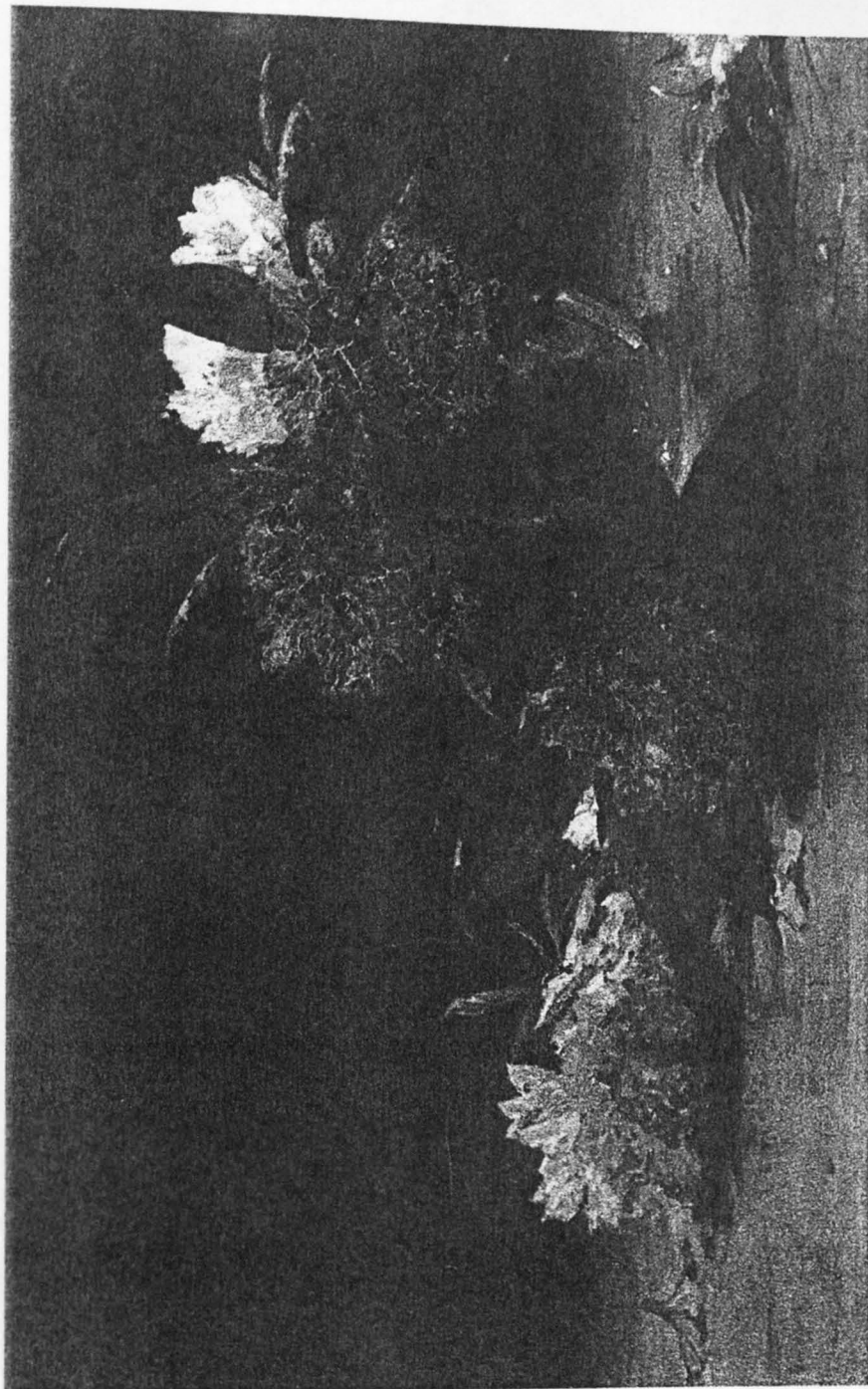
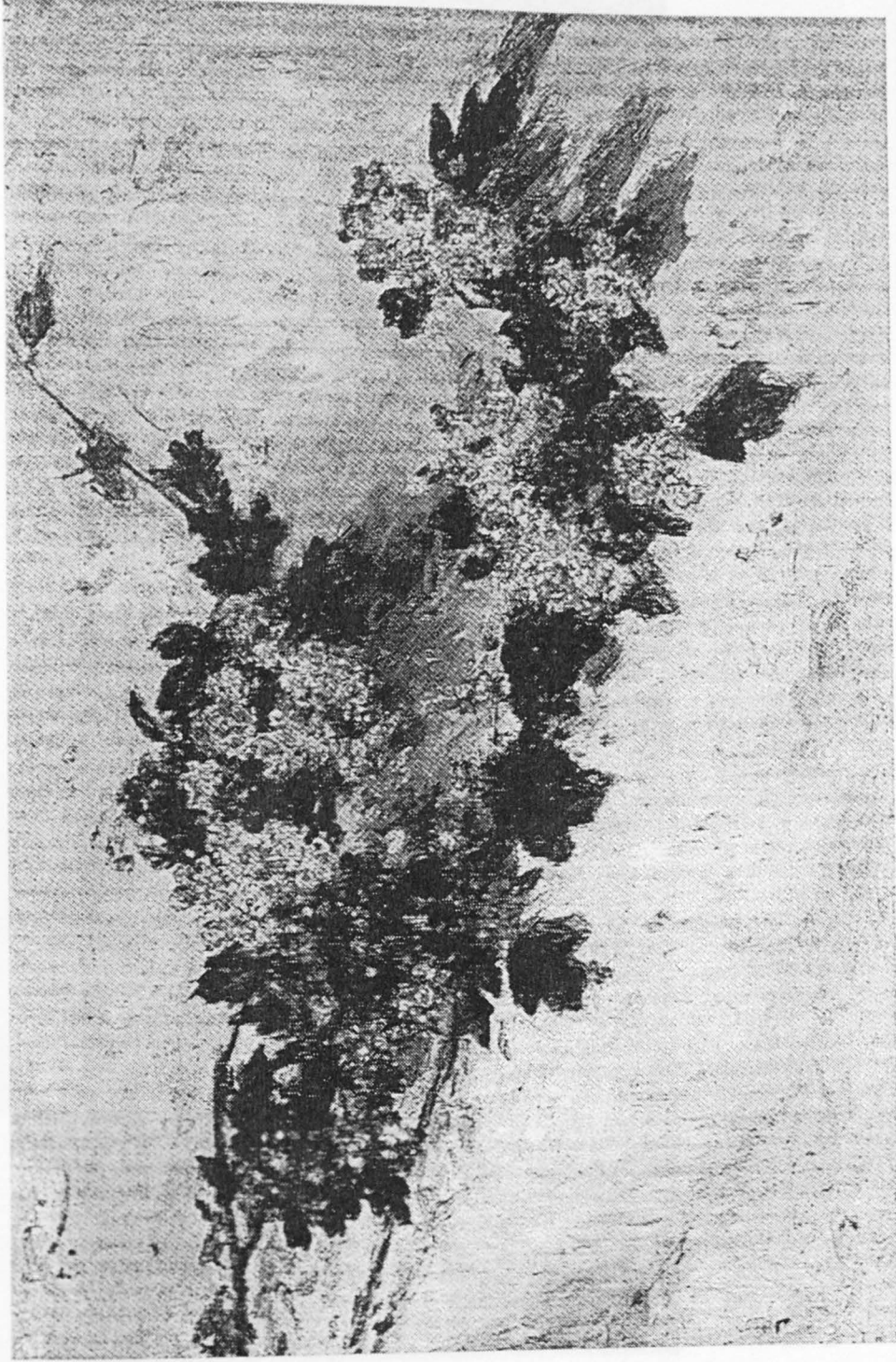


Plate 48

Rhododendrons 1884 by Sir George Reid PRSA
City of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums



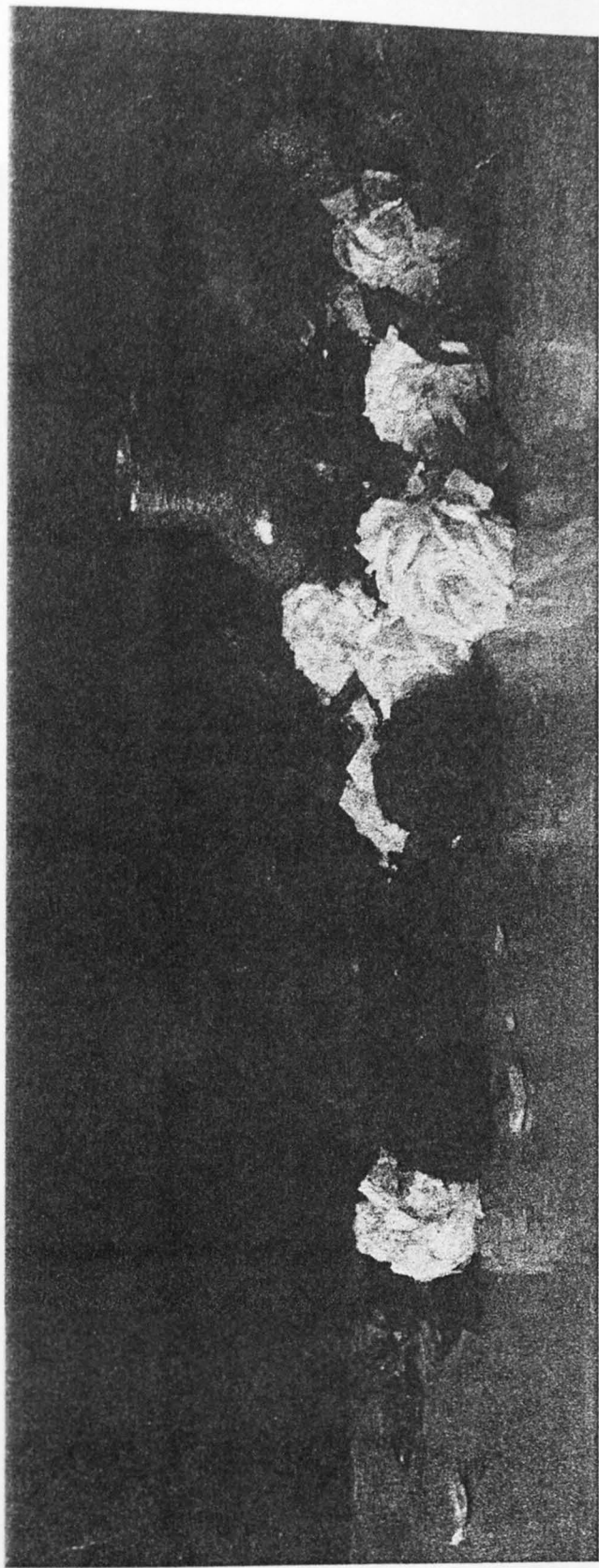
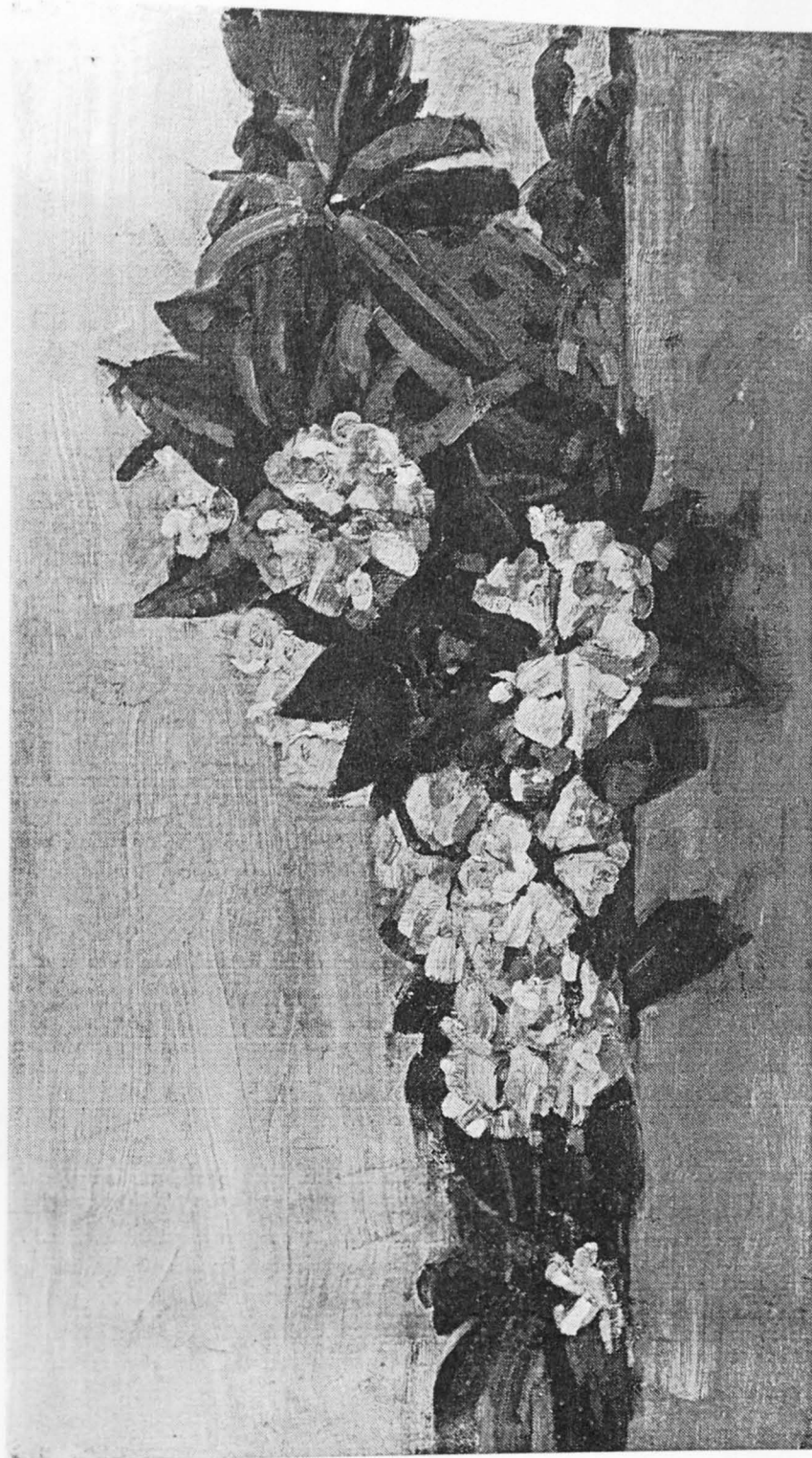
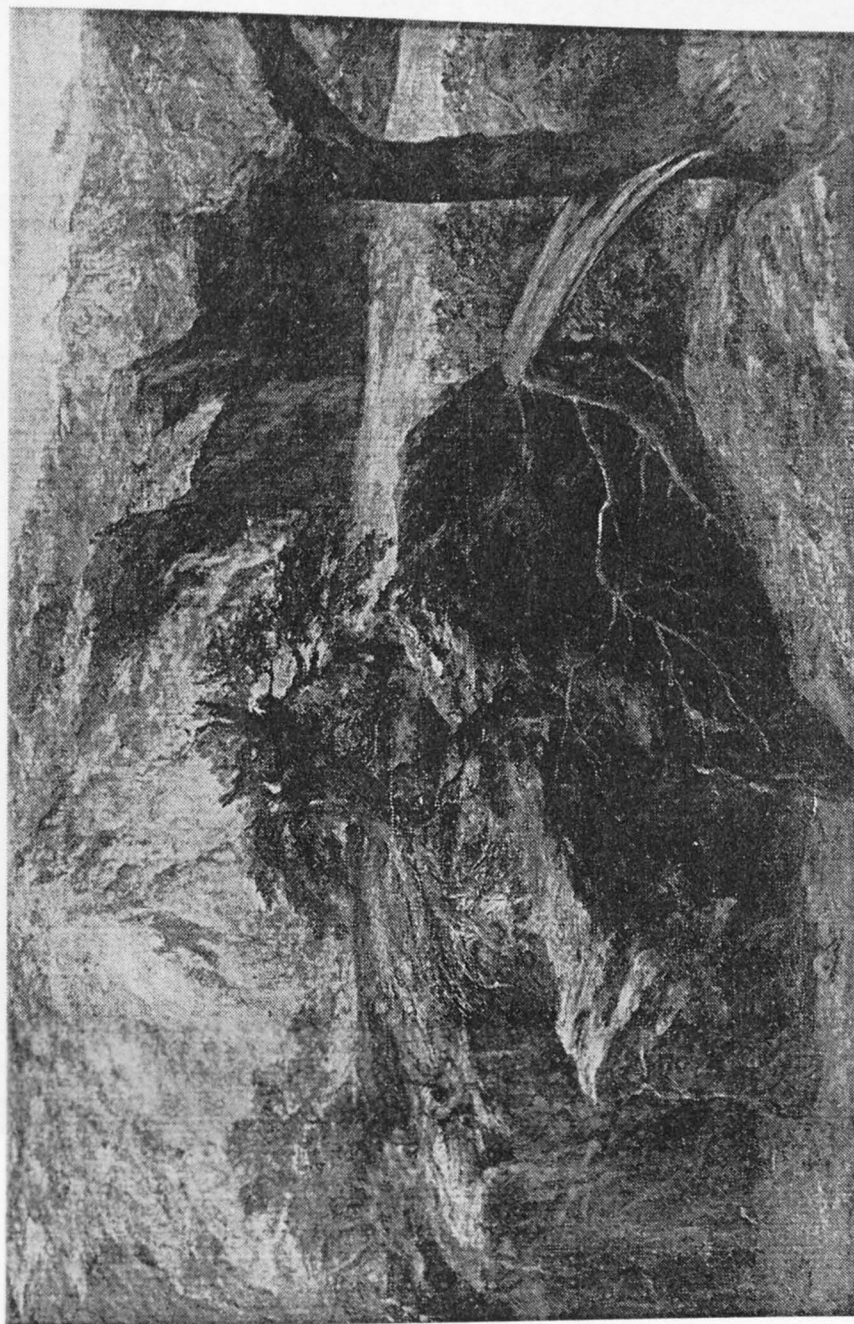




Plate 51

Roses c 1891 by J. Stuart Park
Private Collection





The Dragon's Cavern "Yawns Wide Within That Holy Steep A Mighty Cavern Dark And Deep By
Blessed Sunbeam Never Lit" c.1877 by Paul Falconer Poole RA
City Of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums

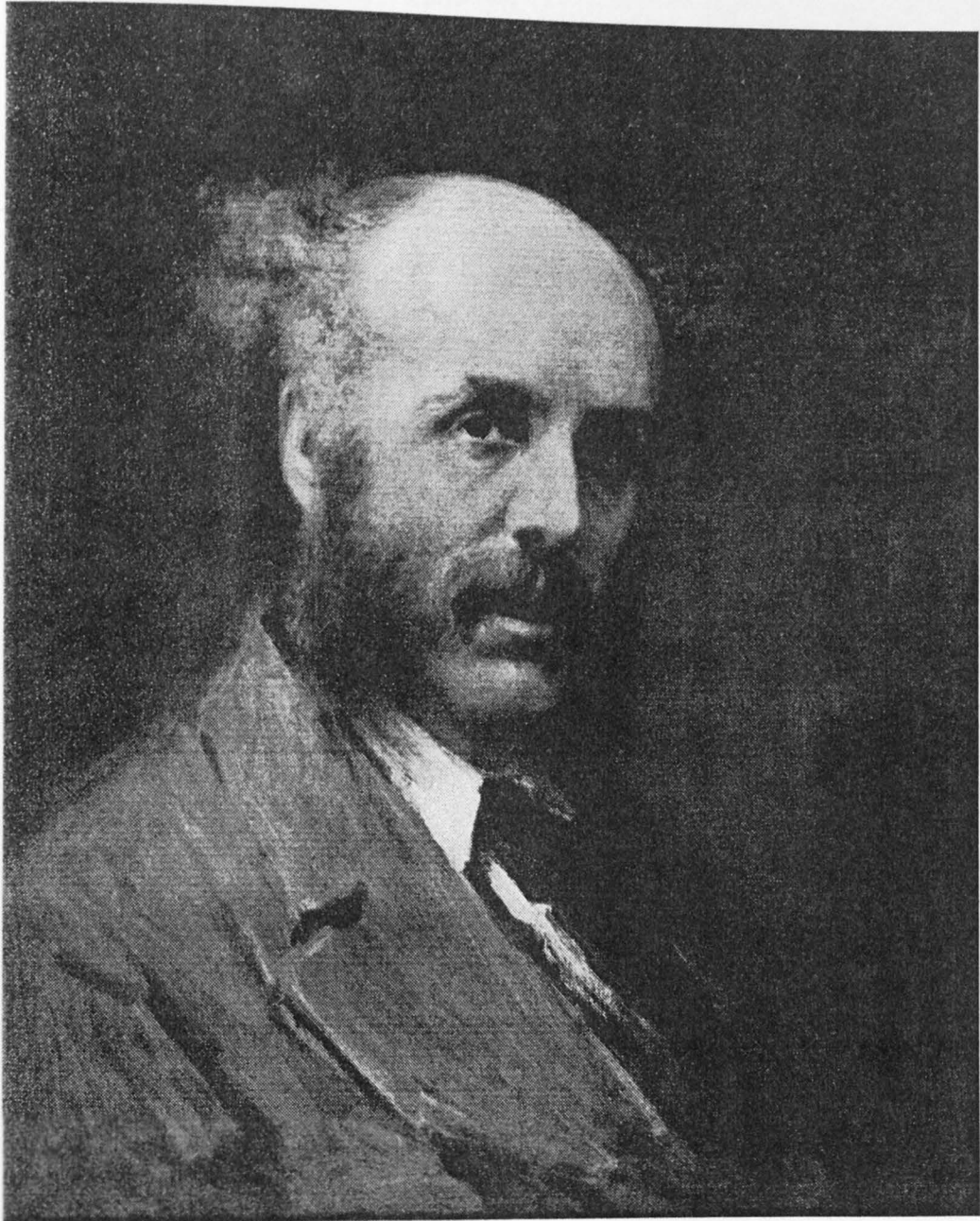


Plate 54

George Paul Chalmers 1878 by Sir George Reid PRSA

City of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums



Plate 54.

George Paul Chalmers 1872 -8 by Sir George Reid
PRSA
City of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums

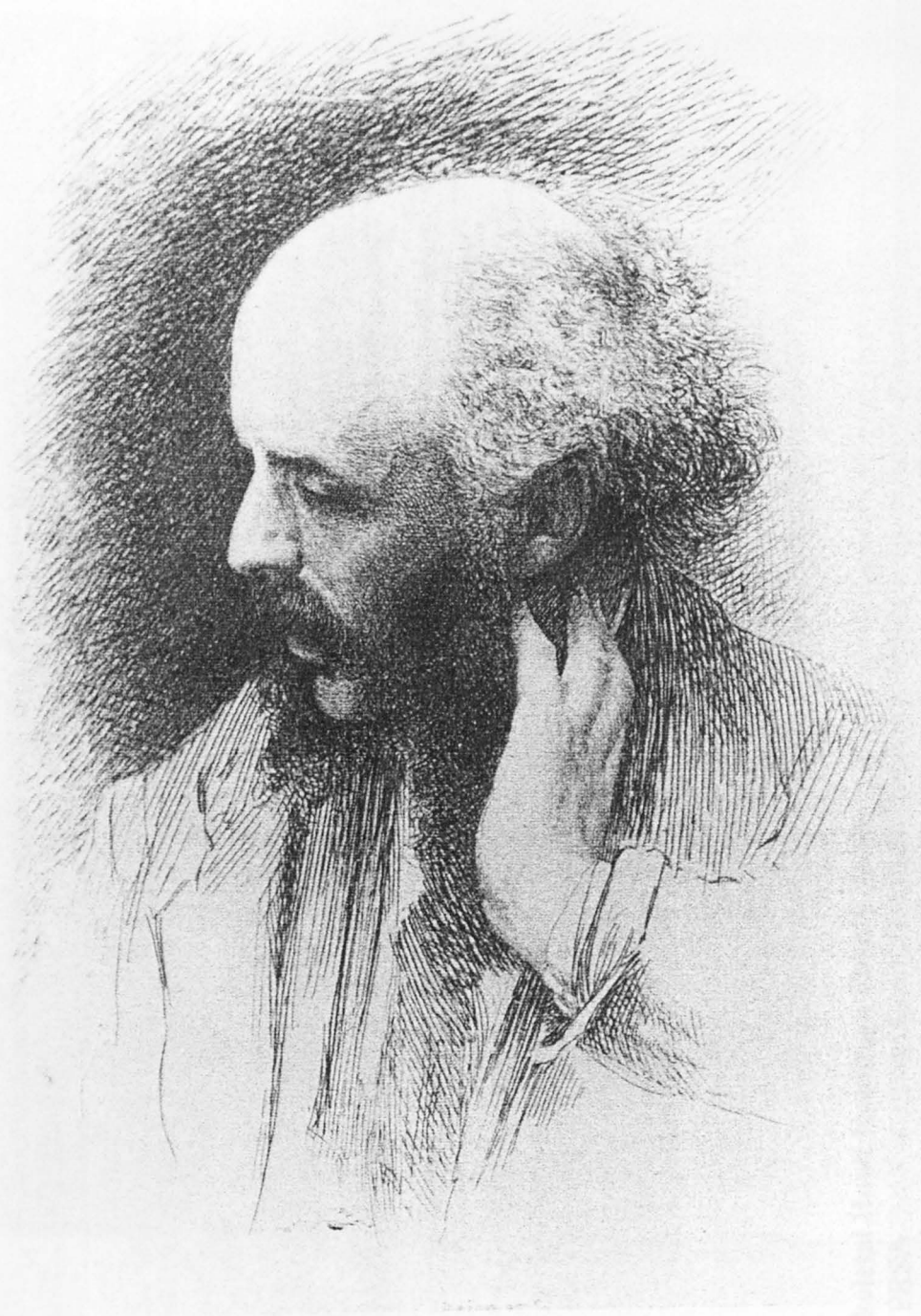
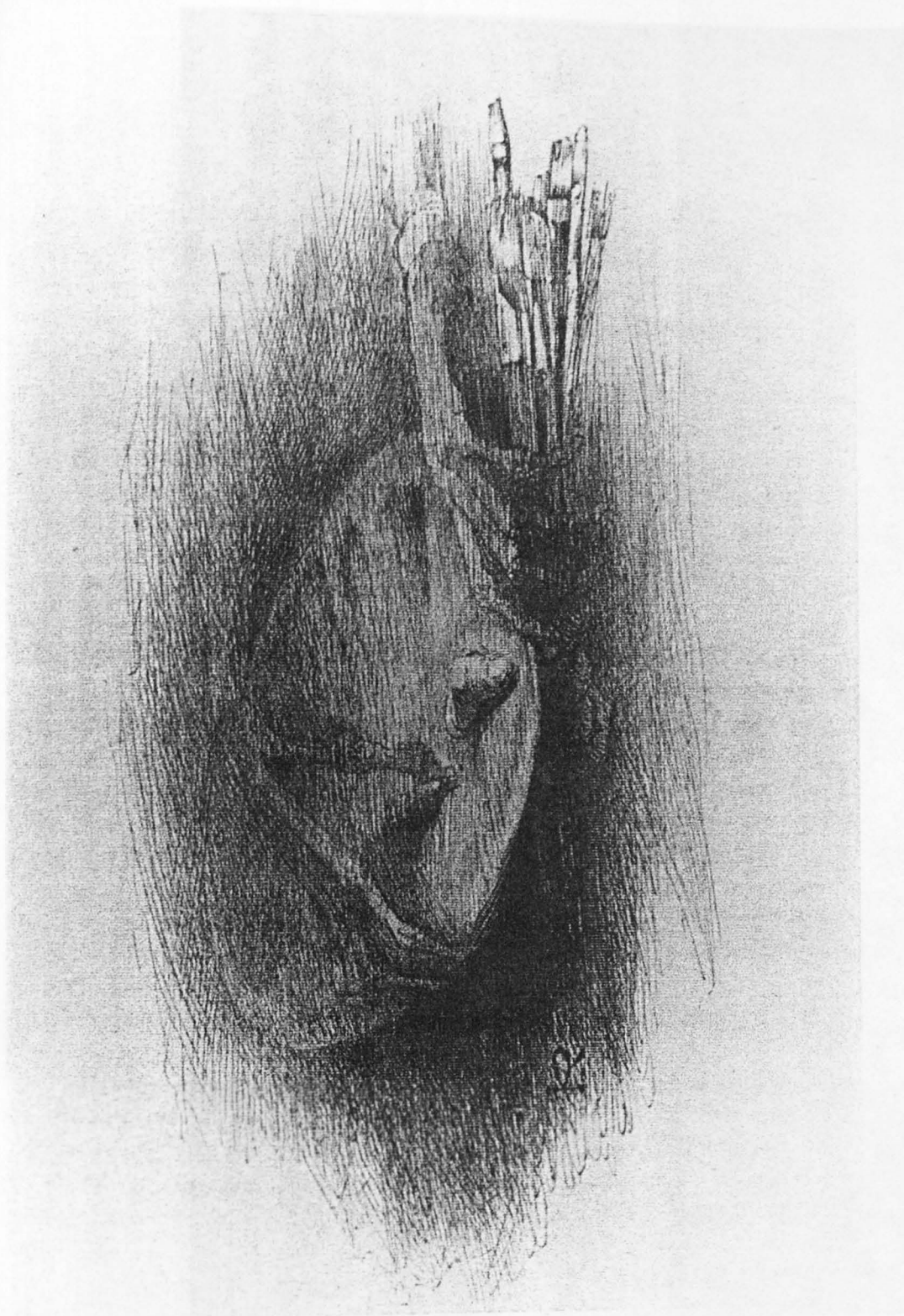
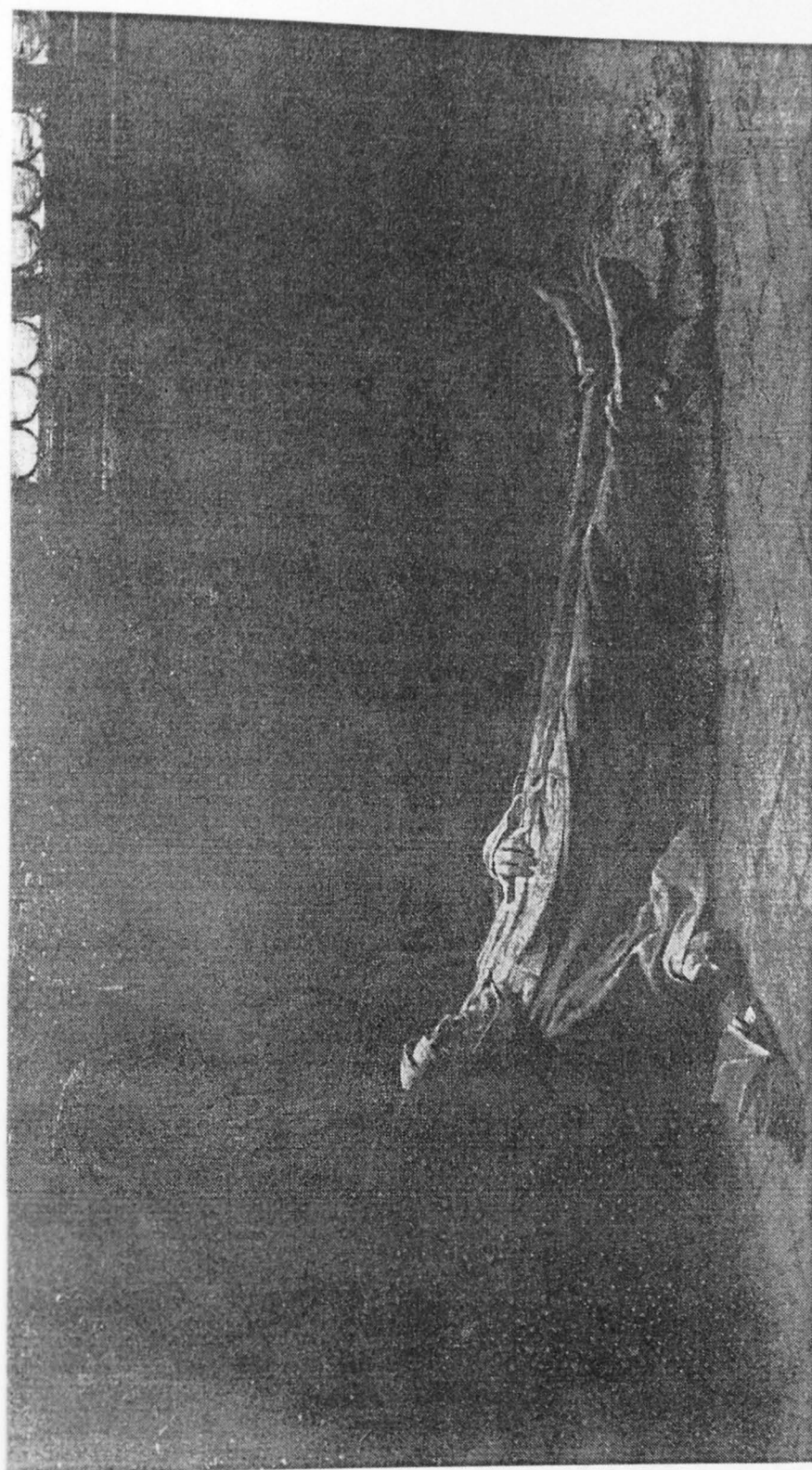


Plate 55

George Paul Chalmers by Paul Rajon (after Sir George Reid PRSA)

City of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums





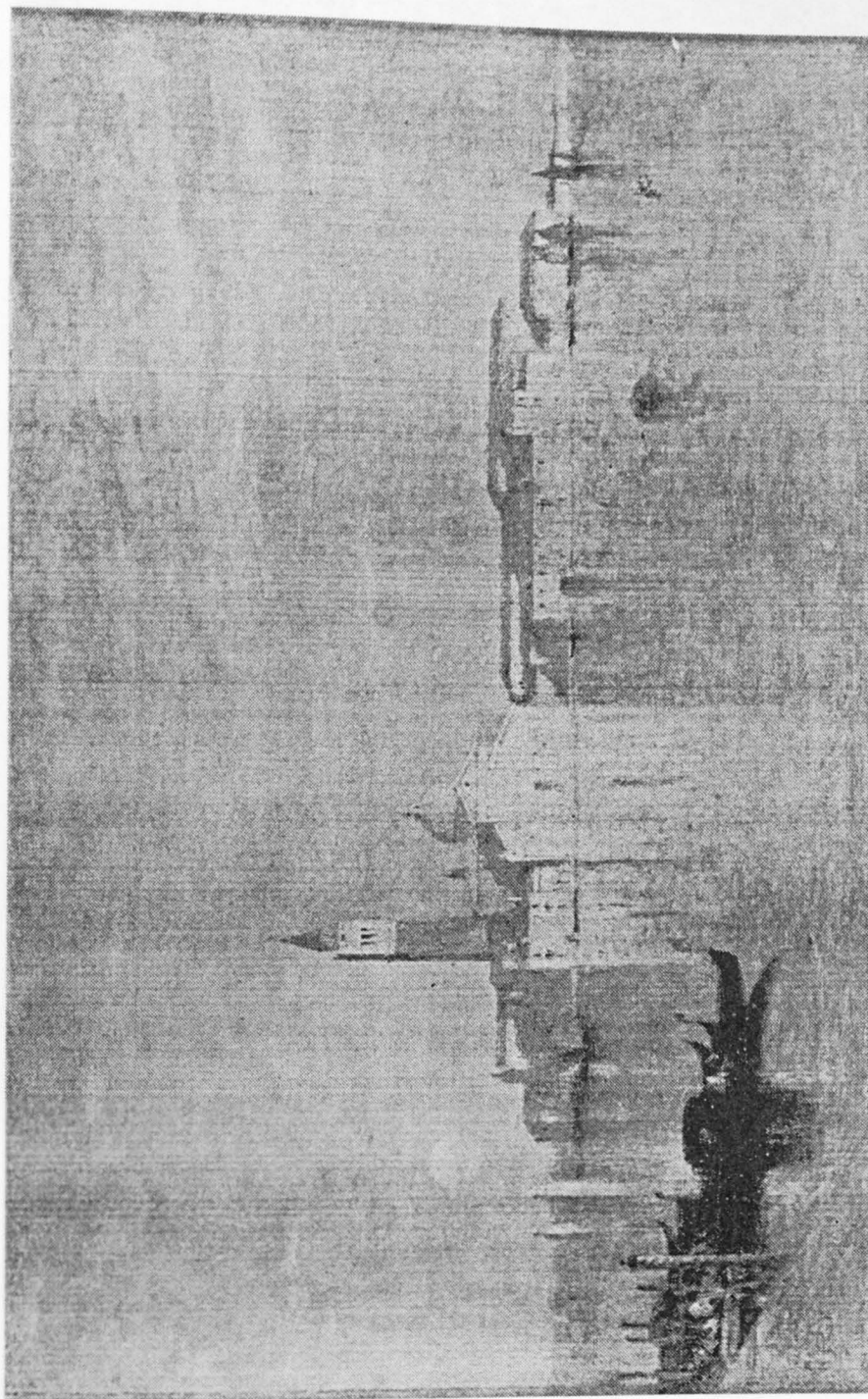
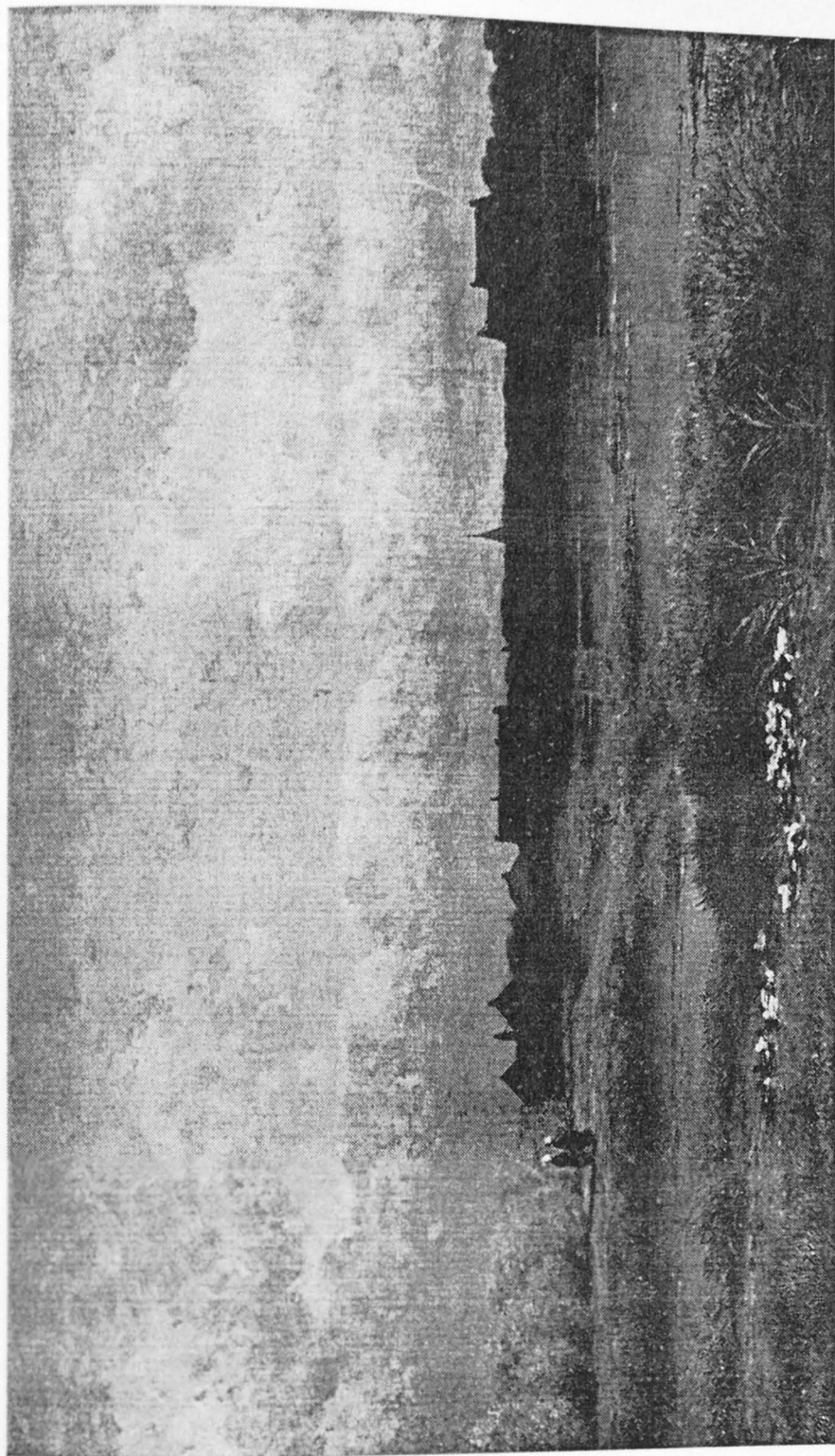
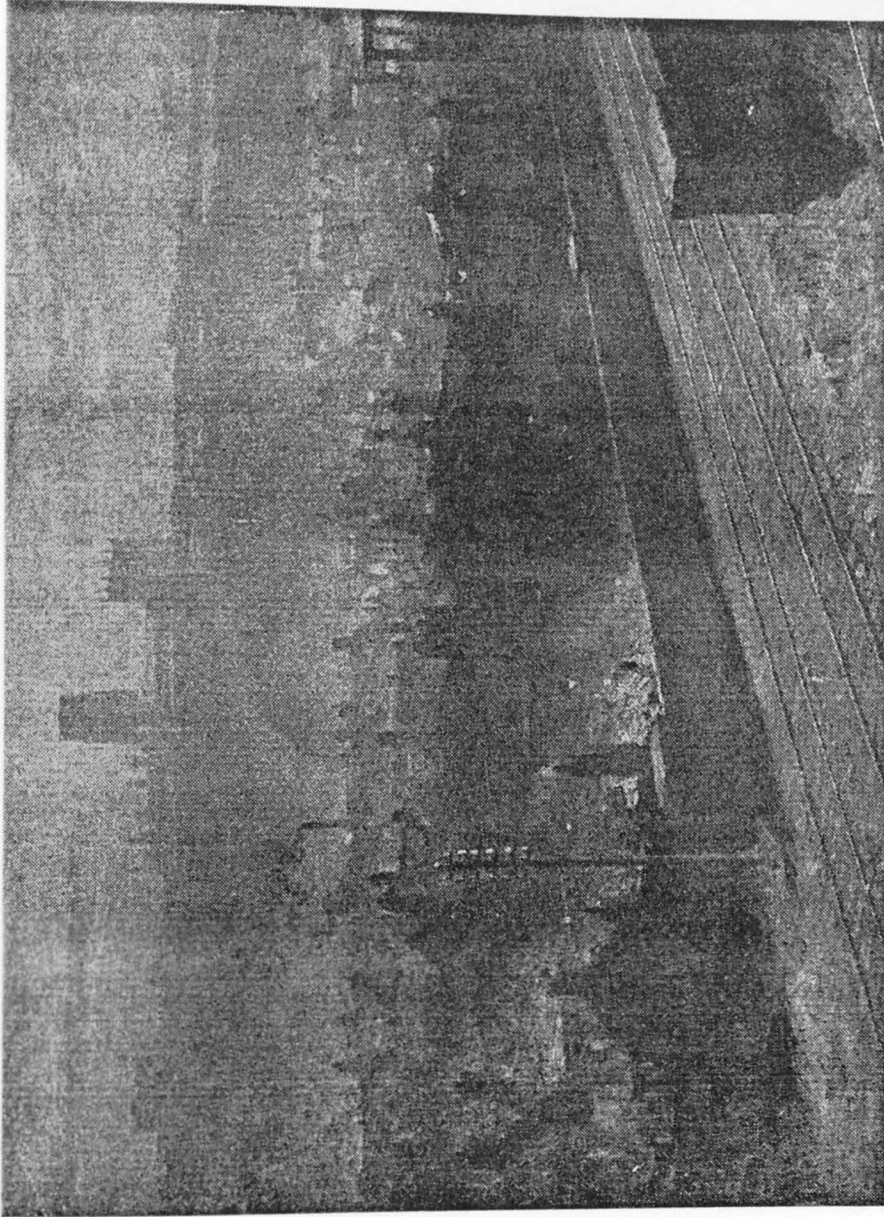


Plate 58

San Giorgio Maggiore by Sir George Reid PRSA
City of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums





Durham 1900 by Sir George Reid PRSA
City of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums



Plate 61

Rev. Alexander Gerard LLD 1879 by Sir George Reid
PRSA

City of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums



Plate 62

John Everett Millais 1880 by Sir George Reid PRSA
City of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums



Plate 63

John Everett Millais

City Of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums

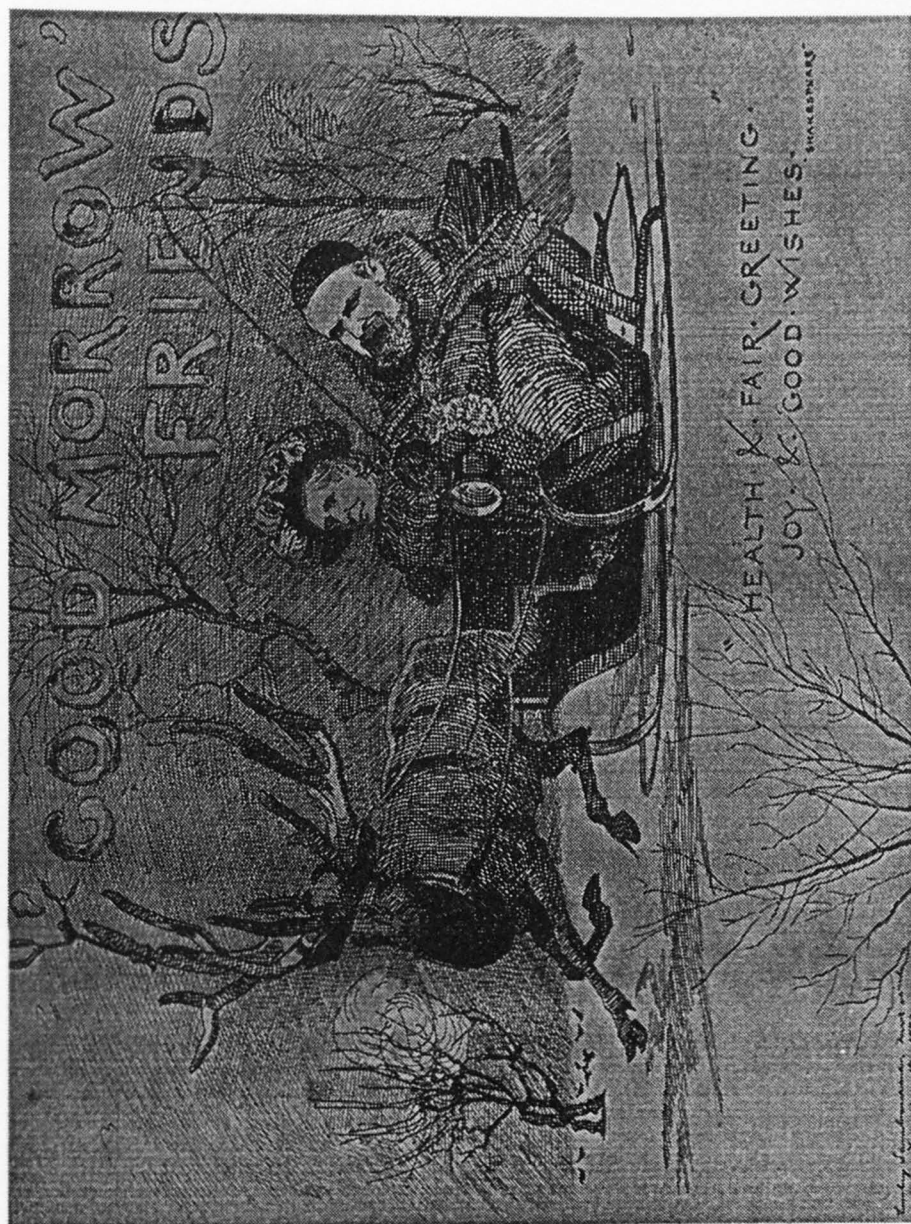


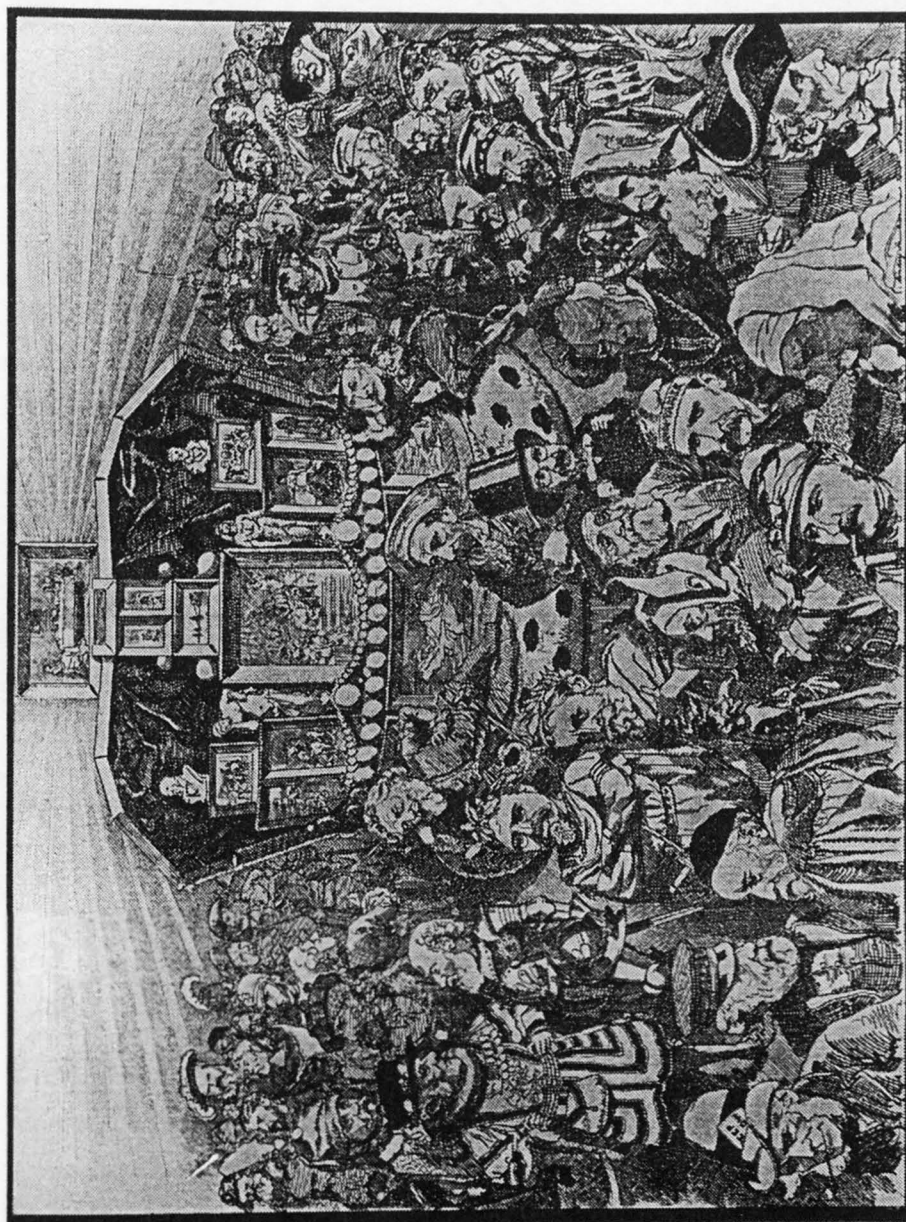
Group Photograph taken At Silverbeck 7 May 1882

Standing left to right: Mrs Alexander Macdonald, Miss Burton (niece of Mrs Hook) Unidentified, Henry B. Davis RA, Linley Sambourne RA, Mrs Sambourne.

Seated Left To Right: Alexander Macdonald, James Clarke Hook, Mrs J.C. Hook, Bryan Hook[?].....

Photographed by A.J. Hook





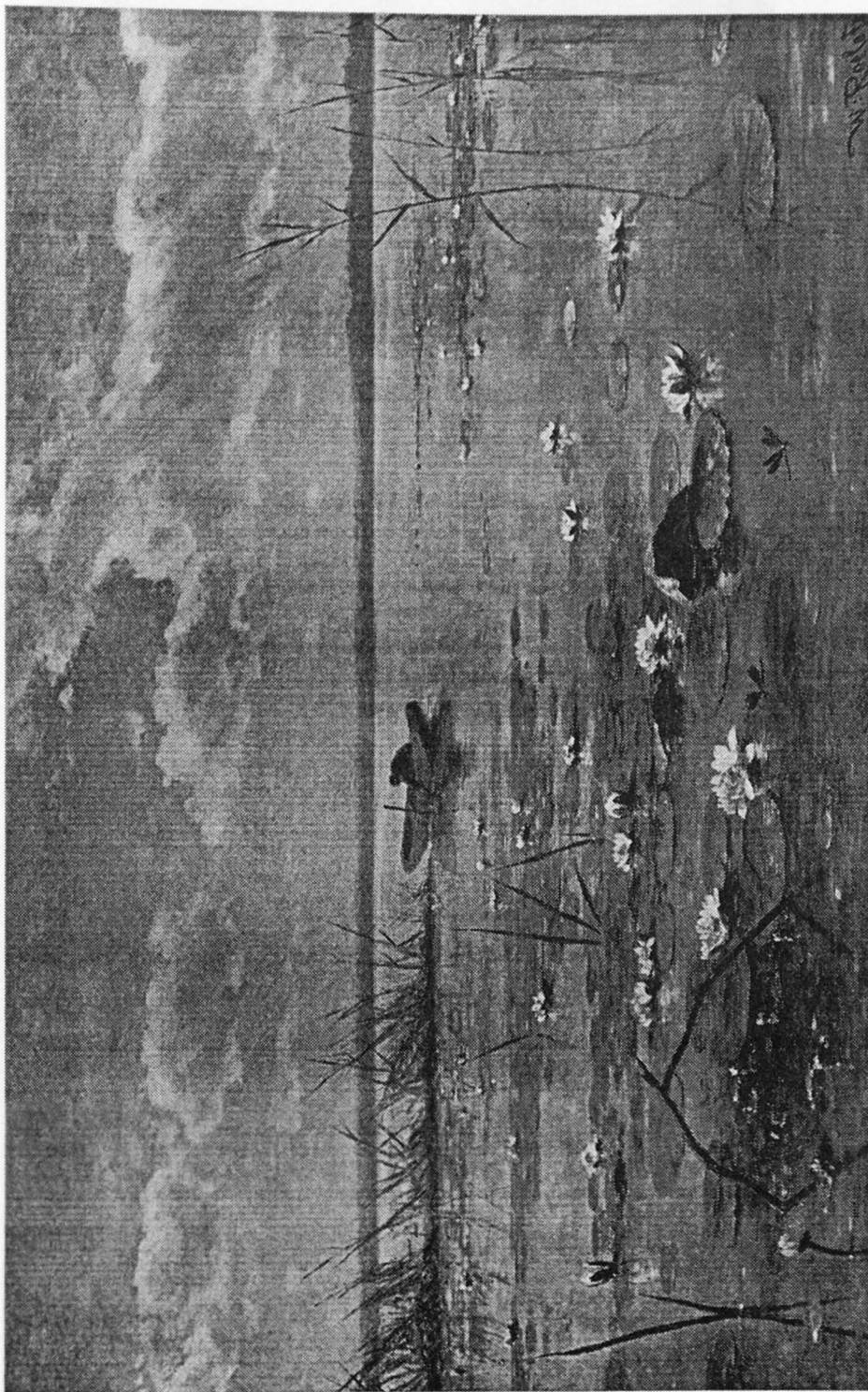


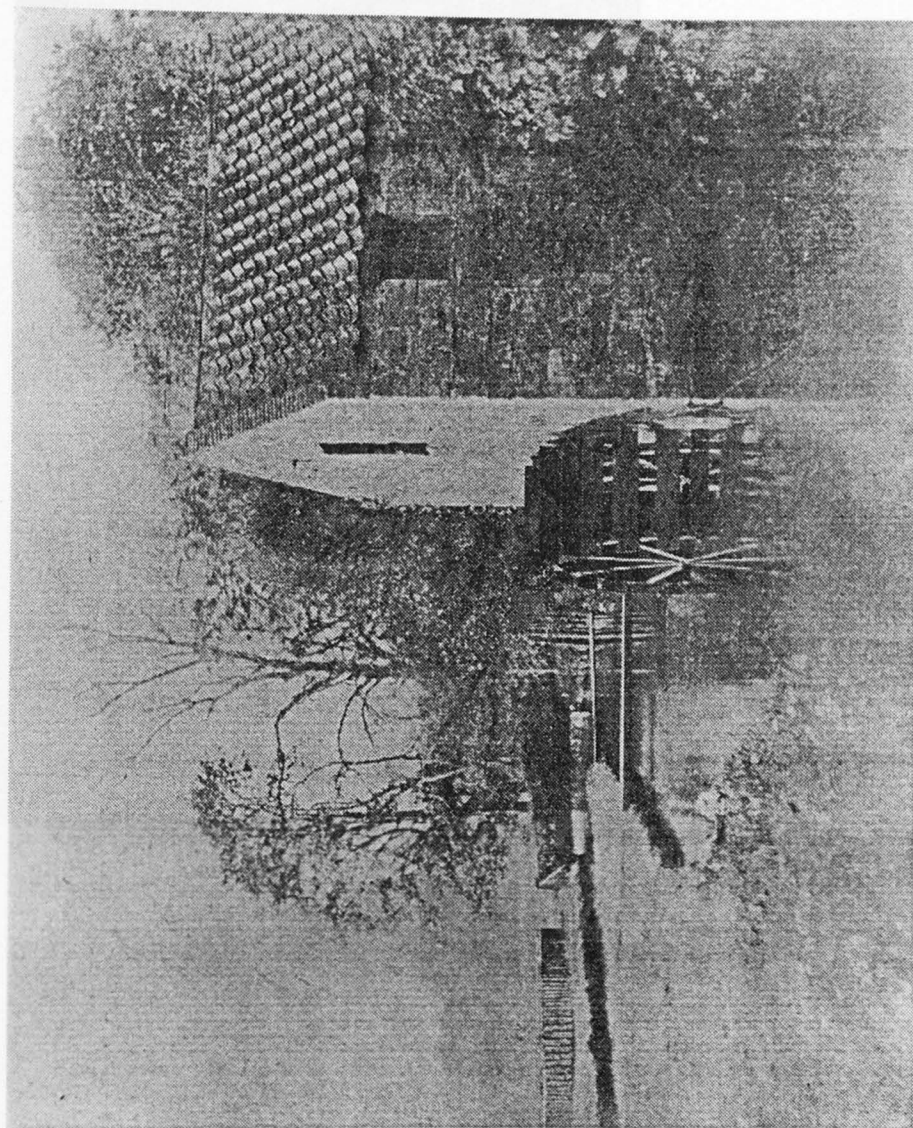




Plate 69

Alice White 1882 by William Stott of Oldham
Private Collection





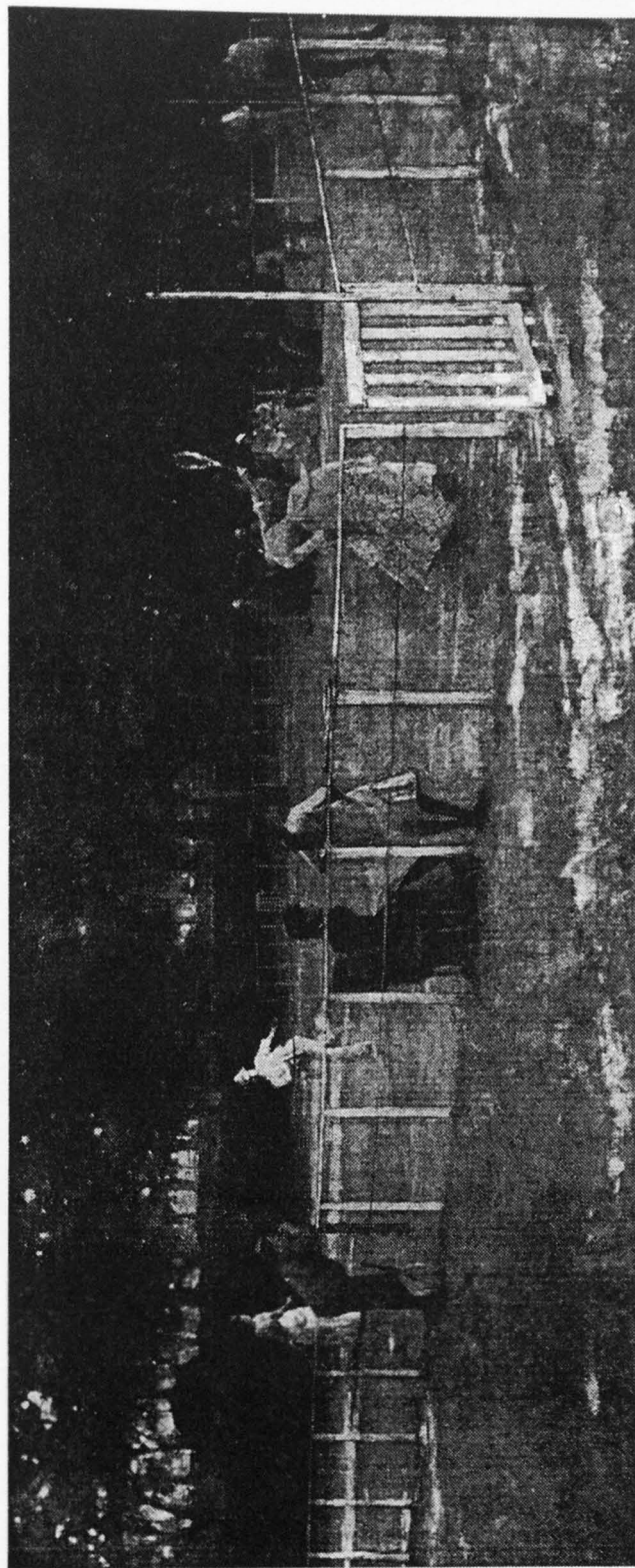
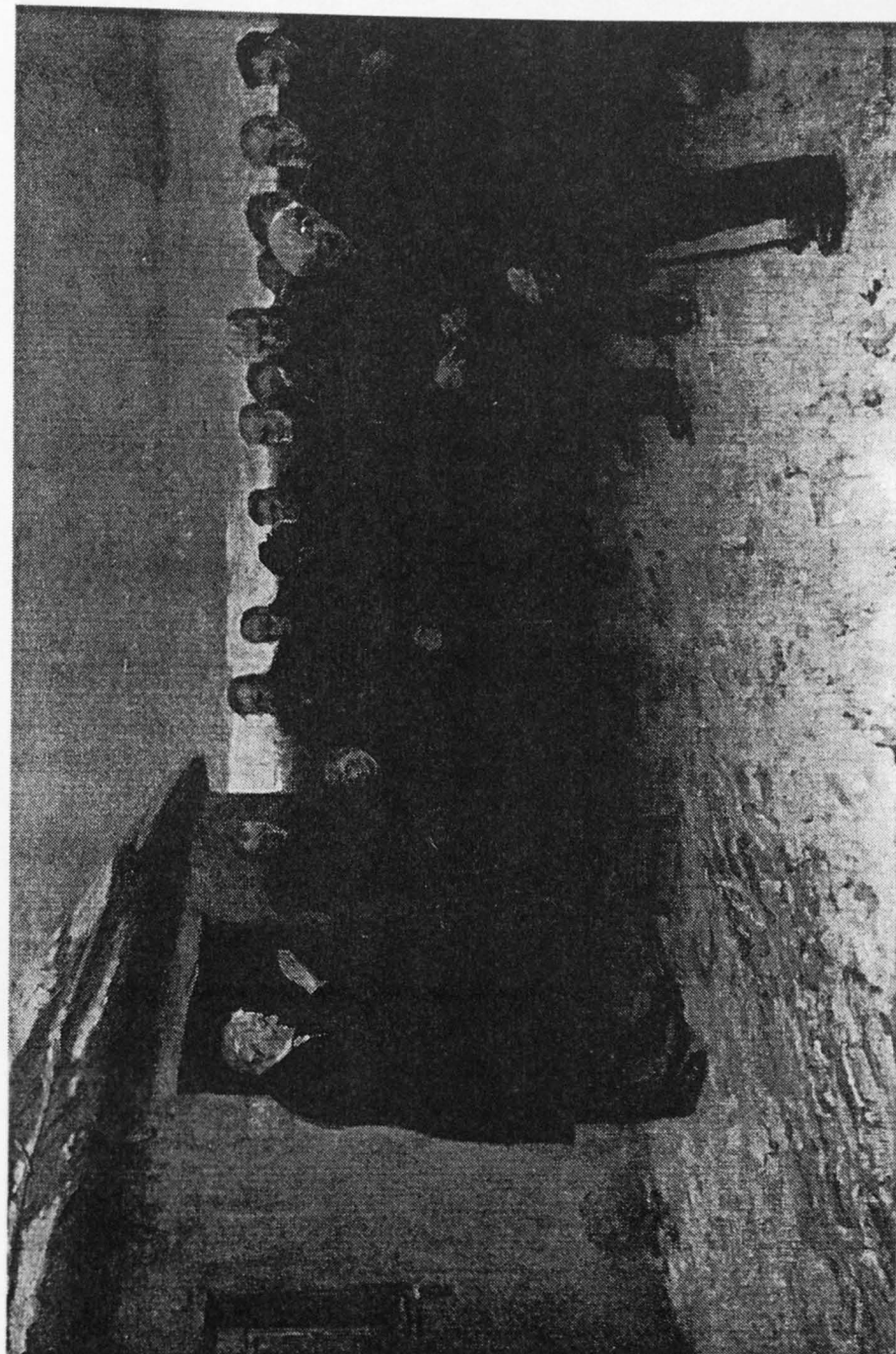


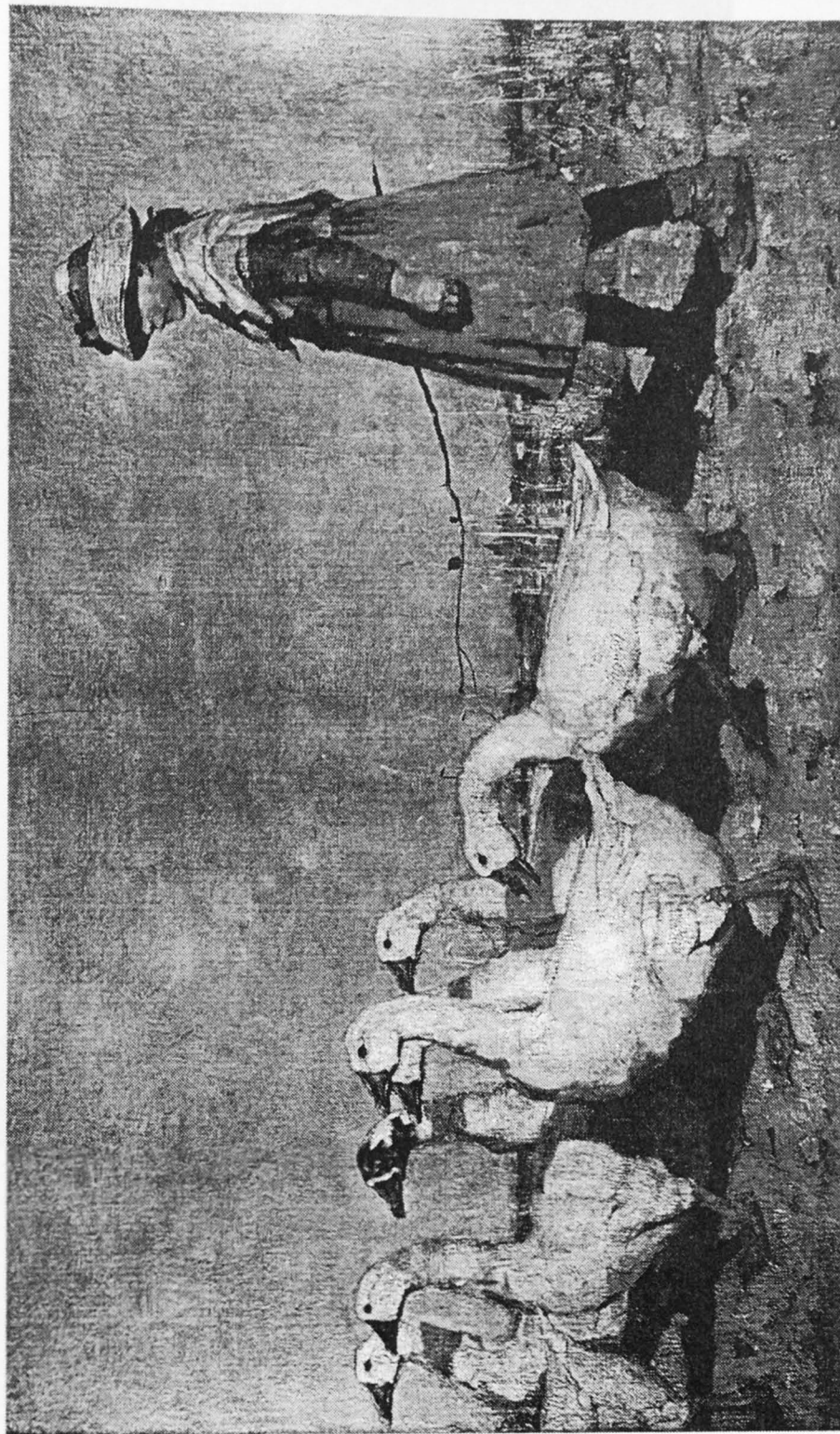
Plate 72

The Tennis Party 1885 by Sir John Lavery RA RSA
City Of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums

Plate 73

A Scottish Service in The Highland 1281-2 by Sir James Guthrie PRSA, J.L.D.
City Of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums





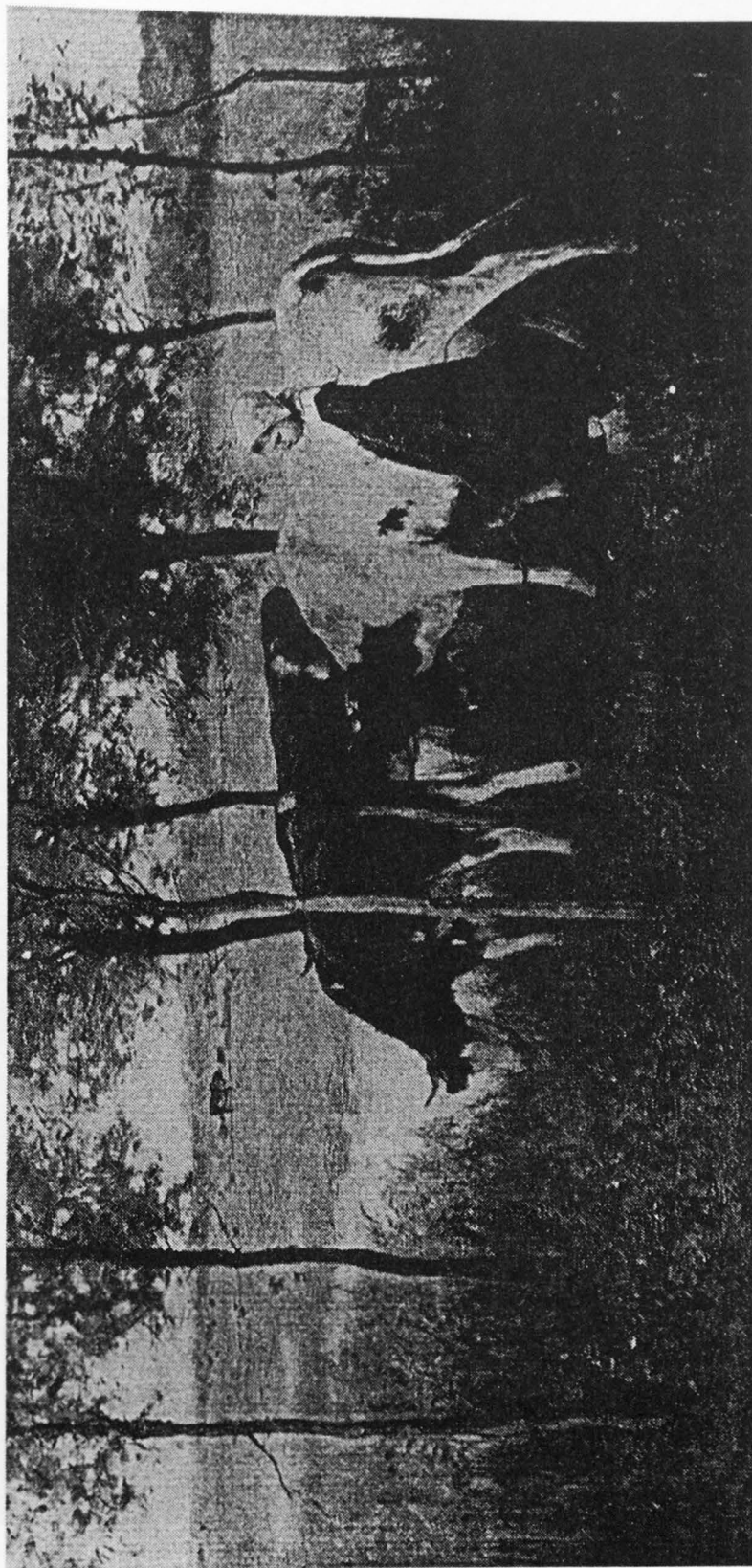


Plate 75 **To Pastures New** by Anton Mauve
Untraced



Plate 76 **Idling On The Sands, Forvie 1882** by Alexander Mann

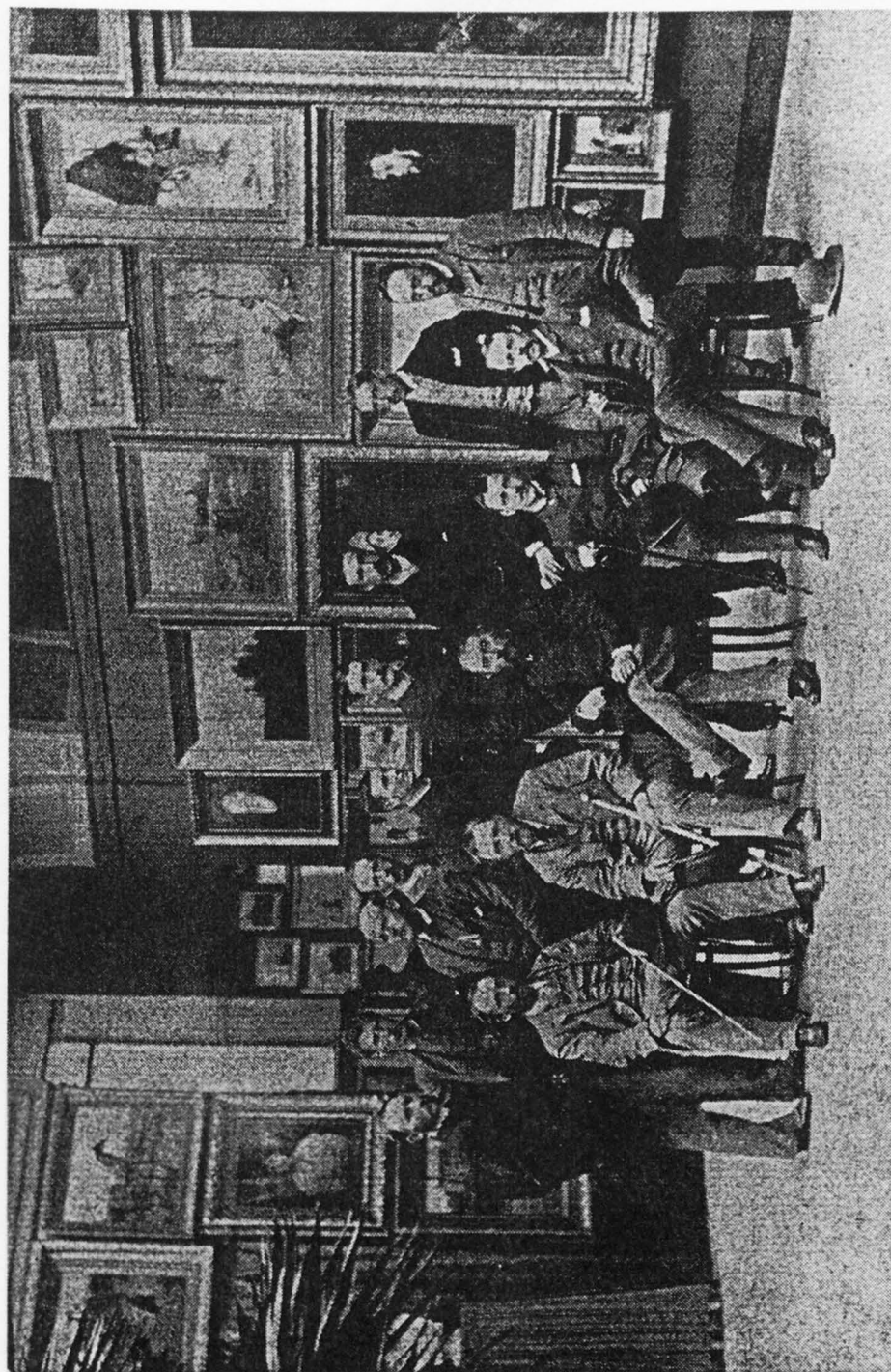


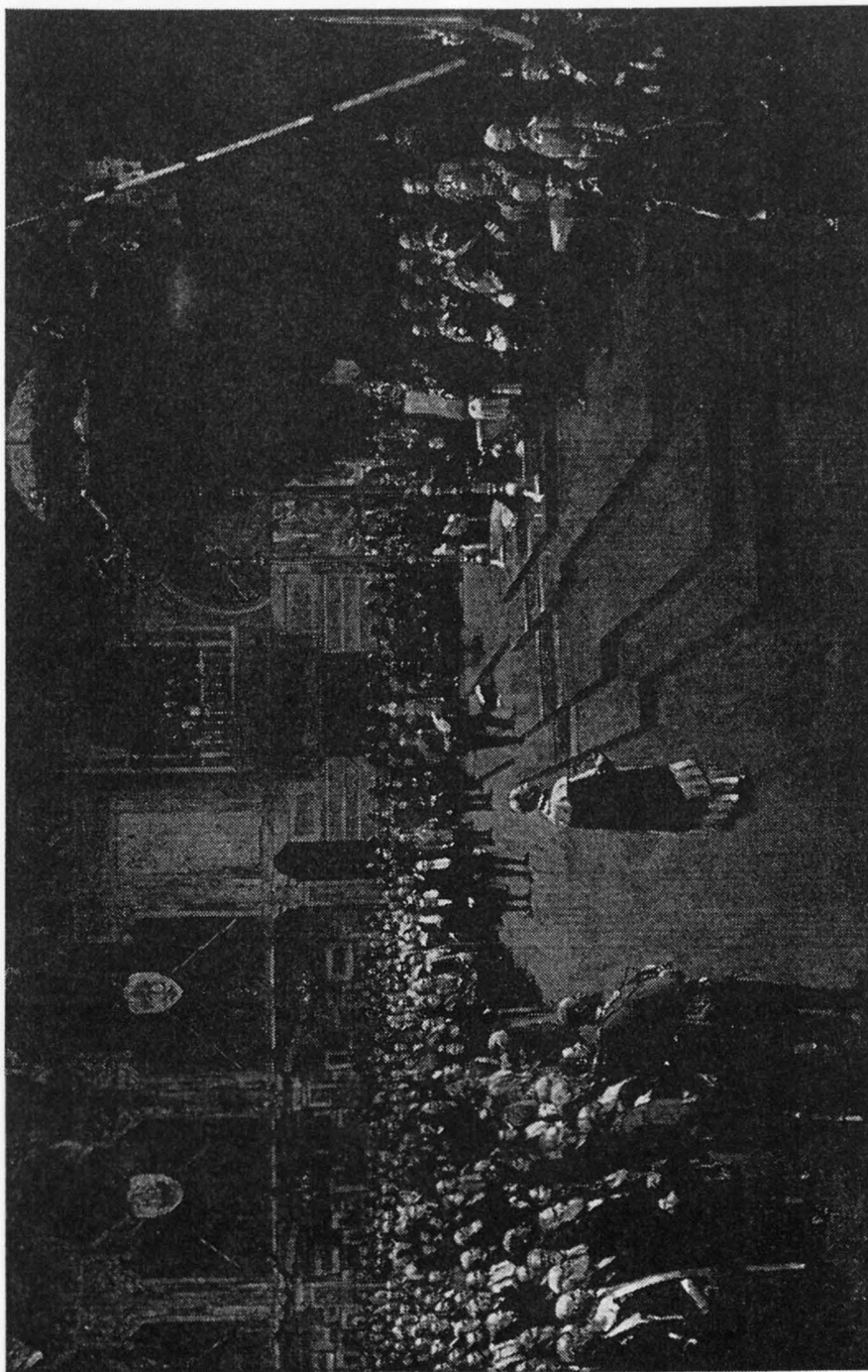
Plate 77

Group Photograph of John Forbes White, James Guthrie and others at the opening of the Aberdeen Artists Society Exhibition 1885



Plate 78

**John Forbes White In Academic Dress On The
Occasion Of His Being Awarded An Honorary Lld
1888**



The Visit of Queen Victoria to The International Exhibition 1888
by John Lavery
Glasgow Art Gallery & Museums



Plate 80

John Forbes White by Sir George Reid
City of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums



The Committee of the Aberdeen Artists Society 1900



Plate 82

Dolly Crombie c.1896 by Robert Brough
City of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums



Plate 83

**Ina White seated in the Private Gallery of 269 Union
Street. 1892 by Arthur Melville**
Private Collection Plate 84



Plate 84

Opal and Grey – Portrait of Rachel White 1896 by
Arthur Melville
untraced

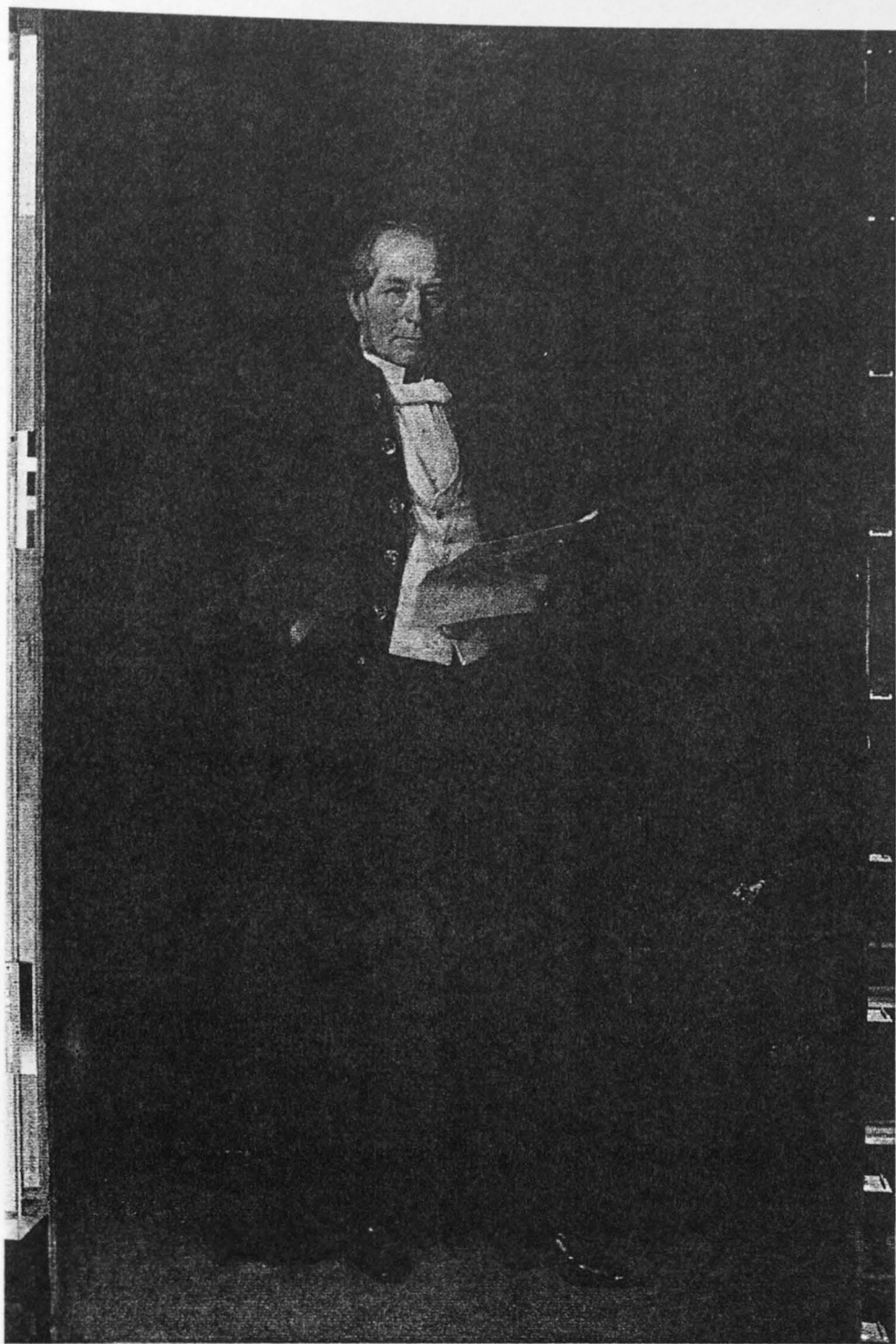


Plate 85

William Henderson 1898 by Sir George Reid PRSA
City of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums

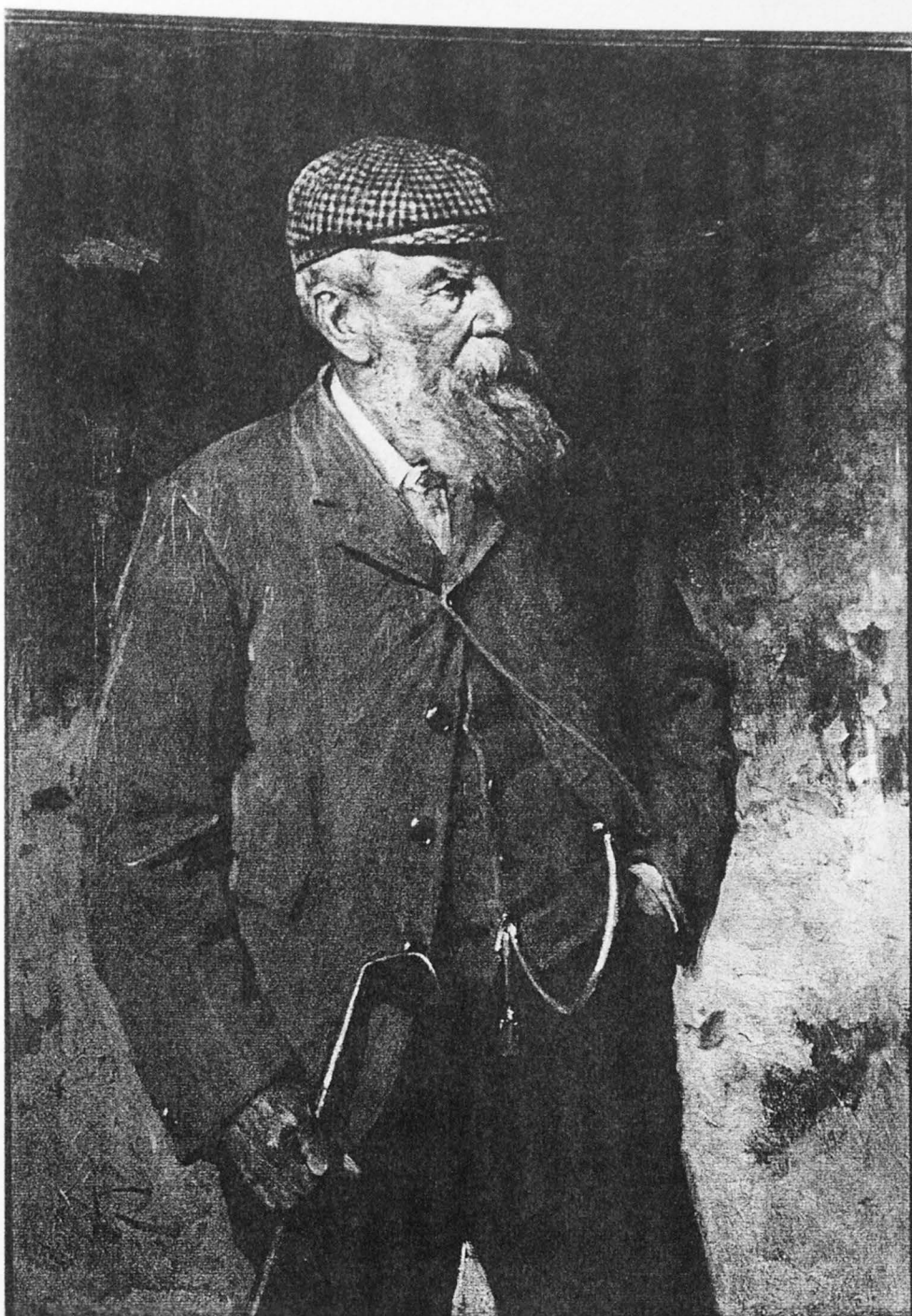


Plate 86

Tom Morris 1903 by Sir George Reid PRSA
St Andrews Golf Course



Plate 87

Rt. Rev James Moorhouse, Bishop of Manchester 1904

by Sir George Reid PRSA

Manchester City Art Gallery



Plate 88

Prof. J.S. Blackie 1892 by Sir George Reid PRSA
Scottish National Portrait Gallery



Plate 89

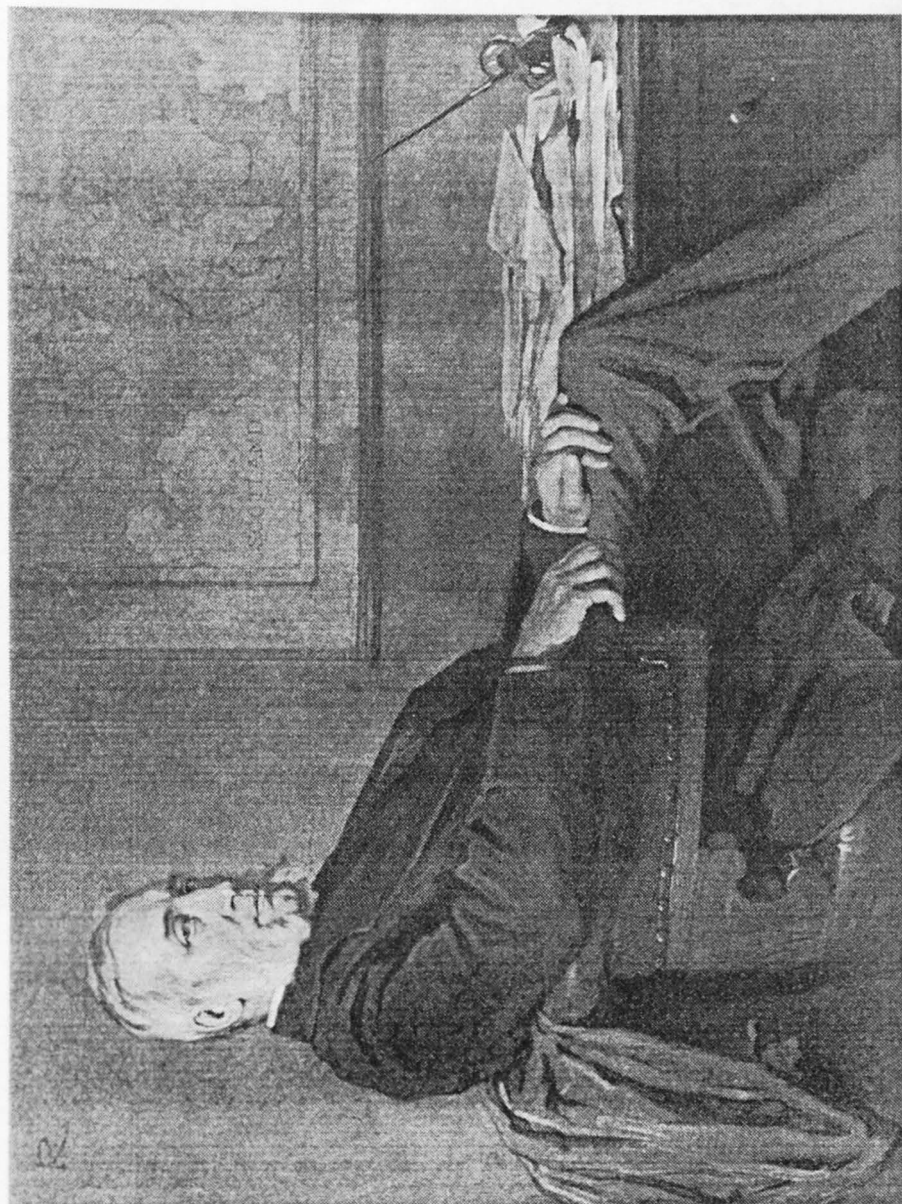
William Duthie of Collynie 1907 by Sir George Reid
PRSA

City of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums



Plate 90

William Carnie 1897 by Sir George Reid PRSA
City of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums



Mr Melland by Sir George Reid PRSA
untraced



Plate 92

Lady Reid by Alexander Roche RSA
City of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums

